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radical becoming in the ongoing now

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

in

Visual Arts

by

Alexandra Neuman

Committee in charge:

Professor Benjamin H. Bratton, Chair  
Professor Ricardo Dominguez, Co-Chair  
Professor Lily Hoang  
Professor Shana Moulton  
Professor Paul Mpagi Sepuya

2021

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University of California San Diego

2021

## EPIGRAPH

Her libido is cosmic, just as her unconscious is worldwide...She alone dares and wishes to know from within, where she, the outcast, has never ceased to hear the resonance of fore-language. She lets the other language speak—the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death.

Hélène Cixous

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

radical becoming in the ongoing now

by

Alexandra Neuman

Master of Fine Arts in Visual Arts

University of California San Diego, 2021

Professor Benjamin H. Bratton, Chair  
Professor Ricardo R. Dominguez, Co-Chair

Inspired by the divinatory practice of the Tarot, this collage series and accompanying text employs the potential of play, chance, and continuous reshuffling towards unraveling the humanist doctrine of separation. Through the conflation of implicit anthropocentric binaries such as nature/culture, life/nonlife, human/animal, male/female, mind/body, past/future, same/other, self/world, *radical becoming in the ongoing now* envisions a praxis of planetary subjectivity in which every Now moment is an opportunity for submerging oneself into the moisture of the W/ hole. Drawing from multi-species feminism, new materialism, and post-colonial theory, this project attempts to facilitate transformations from the static category of 'human being' into the ecstatic process of 'radical becoming'.

radical becoming in the ongoing now

the human being is characterized by a negation of the Other. the human being destroys himself and his planet by clinging to his narcissistic systems of classification. as long as the human being understands himself as separate and discrete, he will never be able to imagine, embody, or dissolve into the ecstasy of union. he will be forever dissatisfied in his lifelong pursuit of domination and exclusion, for this is all that his History has left for him.

radical becomings can only be characterized by continuous mutation, remaking themselves in every moment as part of a co-emergent process with the places and temporalities in which they are enmeshed. radical becomings are catalyzed by liminality, their existential praxis is the aesthetic implosion of boundaries between self/Other, the incessant crossings of all established borders, the meticulous openings of moist spaces for all bodies to sync in.

the human being lives in naive devotion to his own knowledges, forgetting that his concept of objectivity can only be born out of violent trajectories of colonialism and epistemicide. he is content to delineate the boundaries of his truths and know the world through his positivist filter of perception, as he only entertains ideas that can be proven by his own machines. he has lost his taste for the great mystery, moving about the world with severe agitation

radical becomings are swimming in turquoise milk. their most powerful weapon against the hegemony of the human being is their ongoing discovery of the topology of pleasure, the infinite sensations they are able to take in when they withdraw themselves from predetermined pathways of desire. this electric matrix explodes scarcity through its intrinsic abundance, seeking ever more forms to incorporate as its vertices.

the human being's life is spent in service to his addictions. facing each new day as a separated Individual calls for desperate patterns of consumption as distraction. his market oversaturates his senses, his pharmacological regimen neutralizes his compassion, his religion validates his sense of self-hatred and indecency. his dependencies make him complicit in global devastation, he can only strive for conformity, wealth, comfort, and easy sleep.

radical becomings are disciples of the womb. all too aware of the physical and psychical blockages imposed by ten-thousand years of patriarchy, they are seeping into its cracks until it bursts, ushering in a deluge of scintillating vaginal fluid. they are surgically rewiring the human being's habitual rhythms, allowing the dryness of linear progress to soften into the wetness of spiralic cyclings. they are not afraid to ask their own bodies a question.

the human being's impulse towards conservatism is directly proportional to his fragility. his stiffness leaves him prone to fractures, and he puts all his efforts towards sealing these shut, avoiding any prospect of critical reorganization. his fear-based claims to privilege and power are based on his species identification, his genitals, his nationality, and the color of his skin, so he fights to uphold the sanctity of any or all of these hierarchical categorizations.

radical becomings are allied with the grotesque--vaginal openings, intestinal worms, bodily fluids, voluptuous swamps, reptilian secretions--anything too close to the fecundity of life, anything that carries the potential to disrupt the boundaries of self, anything possessing a slithering primordial power. quietly bubbling at the edges of human decency, the grotesque is the affect of radical seduction.

the human being rejects myth, magic, monsters, matriarchy, menstruation—all things too slippery to be spoken in his language. the human being says NO to the present moment, over and over again for eternity. all of his abstractions are built on his image of 'the future', all of his neuroses are sustained by his memories of 'the past', all of his callousness relies on separation from the Otherness that is the shimmering potential for change within every instant.

radical becomings play with the promises of linear Time. no longer bound by the normalizing programs of past and future, the only tense of radical becoming is the ongoing NOW, the ever-present non-site of perpetual transformation. in the dark and unsentimental underbelly of each passing moment, radical becomings melt into their pulsating aliveness, a condition pronounced by its equally vital inverse of ecstatic death.



**Figure 1:** A collage entitled "Myth" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 1. MYTH

*reaching towards a mythic past when the present locks its doors to all futures*

there are many systems of knowledge that have been steadily and violently stamped out of collective awareness. what we tend to view as objective or rational truths are only relative truths born out of colonialist, eurocentric, sexist, racist, classist, capitalist frameworks that tentatively succeeded in dominating all the others.

a major step in creating a viable future involves taking each truth as a useful framework without claiming it as absolute. once we become open to various ways of knowing, we can begin to recognize and unravel all the ways in which we implicitly uphold a dominator value system by valorizing exclusion under the guise of objectivity.

through conscientious engagement with a diverse array of magical, mythical, mystical, matriarchal and ecologically-oriented knowledges, we may discover an abundant supply of longstanding approaches to healing the individual and collective existential problems that we face as a direct result of the imbalances caused by a homogenization of knowing.

situated truth: not all truths can be proven by predominant methods of truthmaking

inquiry: what is the function of myth // what is the myth of Reason

research: make a list of unknown unknowns // have a conversation in an unintelligible

language // internalize a cosmology that is different from your own



**Figure 2:** A collage entitled "Fecundity" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



## 2. FECUNDITY

*i juice the moon and use it as lotion, i wade through the slime your viscous ocean*

many moist things such as frogs, cunts, swamps, caves, and marshes provoke a sense of unease and disgust, primarily because of our collective inability to deal with fecundity in its most obvious manifestations. in a dry patriarchal context, darkness and wetness are to be avoided as Other.

dryness is the prevailing norm, despite its status as opposite to life, and can be readily found in office spaces, institutions, and genitals that have not been lovingly stimulated. the few socially sanctioned opportunities for wetness are highly controlled and quickly cleaned off with a towel.

by finding opportunities to reincorporate the mystery and vitality of wetness into our ways of living, we plant seeds of pleasure within ourselves and all around us. the long overdue reconnection with our own bodies involves a long overdue reconnection with mud, an openness to the planet as moisturizer.

situated truth: wetness is the condition of being alive, dryness is an attempt to avoid it

inquiry: which areas of my life are most dry // what are some potentials for infusing them with wetness

research: kneel in the shower // spread honey on a lover // breathe by an active swamp



**Figure 3:** A collage entitled "Actualization" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

### 3. ACTUALIZATION

*both slugs are absorbing the energies of a sick earth. the first one is succumbing to anxiety and the second is persisting through small actions*

every living thing bares a desiring force that propels it towards its own fruition, each on its own scale and in relation with its own context. despite the infinite variety of ways in which to undergo this lifelong process of becoming, many beings direct their innermost drives towards capitalist and patriarchal forms of progress.

definitions of 'growth' based only on individual profit distort our innate potentials while blinding us to the multiple crises they have created. as every being becomes increasingly vulnerable to the possibility of planetary ecological collapse, 'nature' can no longer be understood as a timeless backdrop for routine transactions.

the precarious present is a space to live by new forms of personal and collective actualization. when concepts of progress are decolonized, living beings and their ecologies are restored their right to the experience of mutual flourishing. every shift towards an ecologically-oriented becoming impacts the viability of the whole.

situated truth: personal growth cedes to mutual flourishing

inquiry: do my goals have any value outside of capitalism // does my labor accelerate or decelerate planetary crises

research: save the world live forever // observe a snail's forward movement // create an ecological hierarchy of needs



**Figure 4:** A collage entitled "Idle Organs" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

#### 4. IDLE ORGANS

*we increase the vital flow rate by way of brutal suction*

the essence of healing is regaining fluidity. when fluidity is lost, there is stuckness, a kind of knot that tightens itself over time, or a series of knots, any one of which may hold the key to loosening all the others. this stuckness can manifest both physically and emotionally, or alternate between the two, as a recurring kink within an overarching matrix of feeling.

some emotional knots must be healed physically. a logical analysis alone can affirm the emotional patterns that sustain the knot, while raw force is what will allow the energy to loosen. some physical knots must be healed emotionally. approaching disease solely as a mechanical error can preclude the agency that a living being has to heal itself through the power of directed attention.

when this entangled interplay is acknowledged, the slackening of stuckness can begin, often uncomfortably with a resurfacing of interwoven and hidden wounds, a necessary stage in the process of unraveling. through this release, a living being regains a taste for circulation, becoming once again a flexible medium for all things to flow in and out.

situated truth: one thing shifts upon which all other things are conditional

inquiry: what is a type of pain that i am currently experiencing // how do its triggers hold the keys

research: acknowledge a knot in your thinking // feel the corresponding knot in your body //

create a gesture of release



**Figure 5:** A collage entitled "Gestation" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 5. GESTATION

*floating on my back in the center of a lake, my one pregnancy terminated when i was struck by lightning in the navel*

every being possesses infinite creative potential within a given lifetime, from the capacity to create new lives to the capacity to create new worlds. despite its inherent boundlessness, this potential is often siphoned into the goal of reproduction, primarily towards the creation of a heteronormative family unit.

for ten-thousand years, the creativity particular to bodies with wombs has been primarily restricted to the home and only allowed to channel itself towards this sole mode of manifestation. this dynamic leaves the external world out of balance, with most societal infrastructures existing as a product and legacy of patriarchal domination.

it is now the existential responsibility of our species to examine our intentions before gestating new bodies. with the power of the womb expanding out from the domestic sphere, the entire planet becomes a possible surface upon which to bestow familial love through this exploded vital energy of creativity.

situated truth: creativity collects in the sacrum

inquiry: does my creative energy manifest on its own terms // what does it most frequently channel into

research: bring your womb into your labor // rotate your hips to stir your pelvic bowl // participate in raising a child that is not your biological relation



**Figure 6:** A collage entitled “Parasite” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



## 6. PARASITE

*i eat you, you eat me. this will be a maximally invasive procedure*

every being is continually defined and sustained by the things going in and out of it. while this complex codependency of all things is inevitable and essential for survival, individual and collective bodies can still maintain awareness of habitual absorptions and excretions, with the intention of both processes increasing one's life force rather than leaking it out.

giving too much leads to exhaustion and weakens the potency of that which a being has to give, while receiving too much can cause greed and perpetual dissatisfaction. gratitude is a restorative feeling that helps keep the two in balance, yet balance is not always an ideal, for threshold crossing is a prerequisite for transformation.

pregnant bodies give extreme amounts of life force to their fetus. lovers give extreme amounts of life force to their obsession. revolutionaries give extreme amounts of life force to their vision. self-sacrificial imbalance with intention can revitalize the whole. standing outside of yourself can involve letting an alien grow inside of you.

situated truth: a body is a membrane of giving and receiving

inquiry: how am i a parasite // when have i given myself completely

research: eat three cloves of raw garlic // cultivate fungi // thank an intruder



**Figure 7:** A collage entitled "Shadow Union" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 7. SHADOW UNION

*we will recall this in full force at the moment of death, or when ecstasy finds a way back to the living*

one of the most overlooked and undervalued areas of life within an epistemology primarily committed to Reason is that of dreamtime. every night as we sleep, our minds enter into an automated creative process, generating comprehensive virtual realities involving all of our senses, with absurd events that we accept as truth until the moment we wake up and forget them.

some dreams are a kaleidoscopic resurfacing of anxieties that we experience during the day. some dreams are vivid and loaded with particular symbolism, like an elk delivering a message in a forest or a person reviving a hummingbird with a fig. some dreams can be consciously created as they happen, and some dreams allow us to roll out of our bodies and float out the window.

the ability to remember and co-create dreams can be improved just by having the intention to do so. within this practice there lies emancipatory potential to disrupt the firm hold of the governing logics of the Real. when this infinite Other space is explored, activations resurface from the shadows of our memories, creating openings for visionary power to expand into our waking lives.

situated truth: dream worlds engender lucidity

inquiry: how can my dream answer my question // what can i create in my sleep

research: climb up a rope out of your body // set a dream intention out loud before going to sleep // convince yourself that you are dreaming



**Figure 8:** A collage entitled "Classification" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 8. CLASSIFICATION

*we are an octopus, but they over there are a squid*

while the impulse to name things and divide them into categories can be useful for making sense of the world, it is crucial to remember that all classification is oversimplification. idealizing dead matter in a museum, in a textbook, or under a microscope imposes the misconception that anything can be understood as separate from the whole.

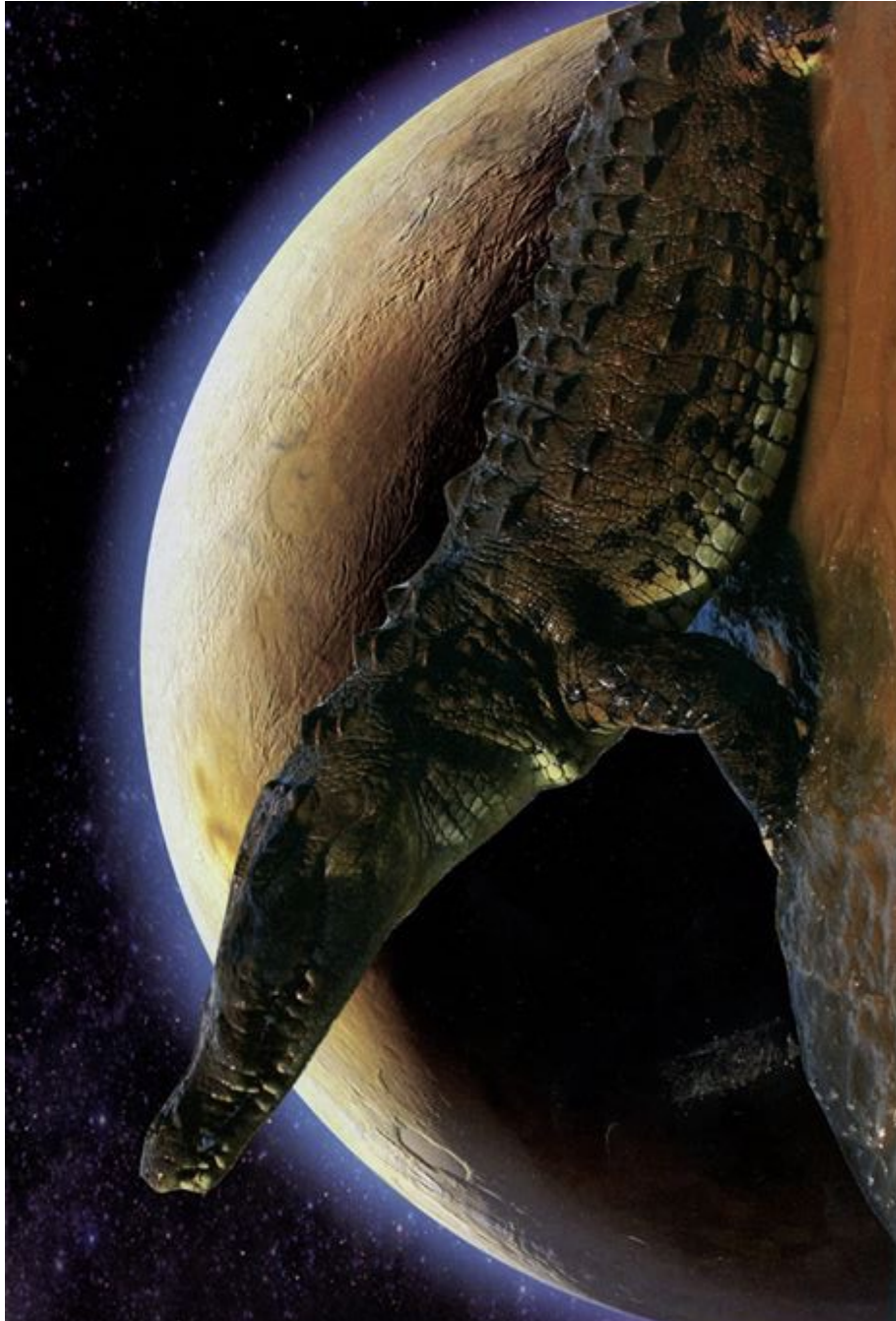
classification when taken as absolute solidifies the boundaries between things, and imposes preconceived qualities that obscure what is immediately in view. the seemingly apolitical convention of species classification continually reinforces the ideological separation between human/animal, nature/culture, male/female, whiteness/blackness, same/other, self/world.

some categories allow us to perceive things that might have never otherwise entered our awareness. some categories predetermine the oppressions and privileges we might go on to experience throughout our lives. the power of classification is both that of invention and exclusion. recontextualizations and mutations can help to strip this power of its objective guise.

situated truth: between all things is a middle that binds them

inquiry: which categories shape my identity // which Other(s) am i defined in opposition to

research: invent a demographic // create a third party for a binary // identify something that is impossible to define



**Figure 9:** A collage entitled “Instinct” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 9. INSTINCT

*silent and postured in ultimate control, with the imminence of pouncing explosively*

the pressure to take action can often spiral into indecision. we believe that with enough planning and calculation the right path will become clear, yet instead the polarity between the options increases, until the action is carried out from a weakened life force and the result is similarly confused. any situation of overthinking precludes the silent receptivity that is required for clear vision.

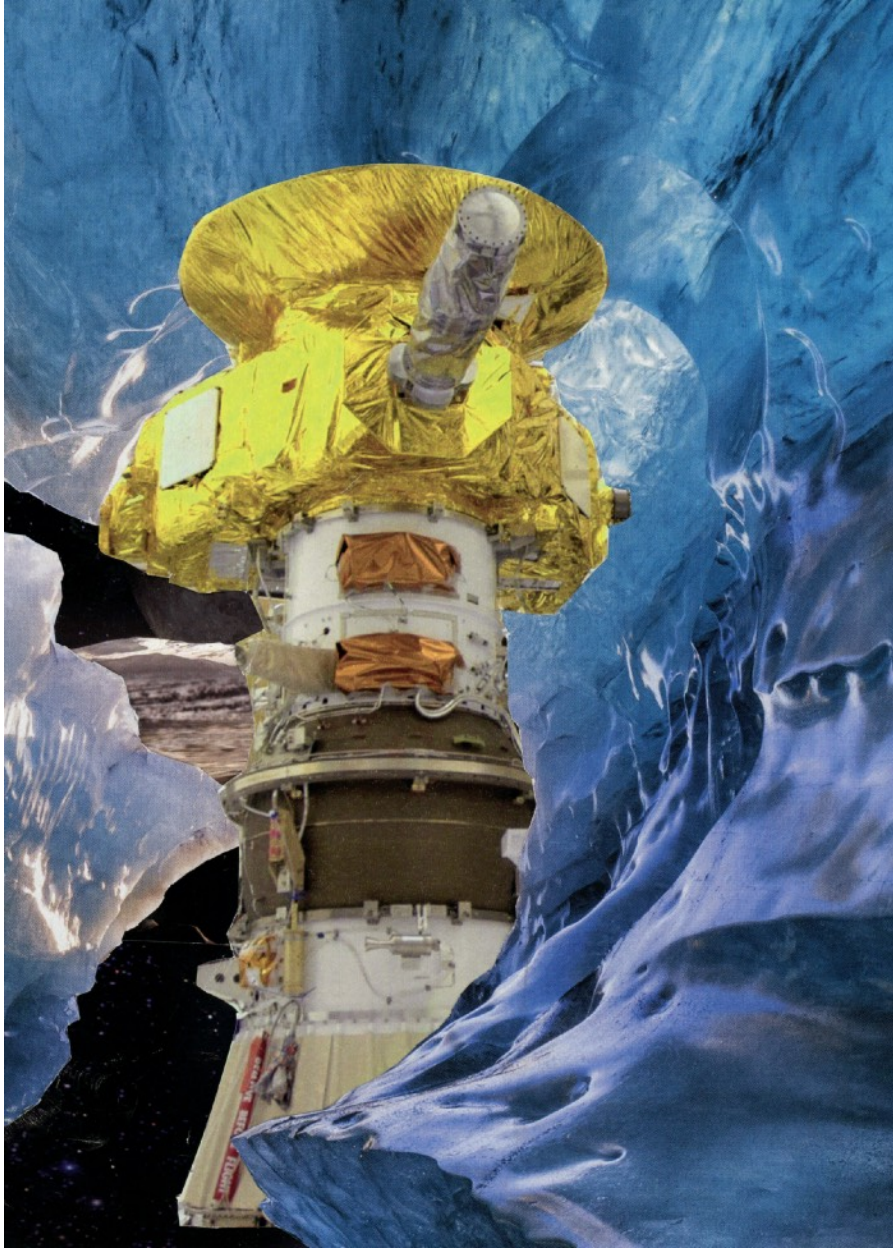
while silence and stillness can often be associated with passivity, holding a space of non-action is often the necessary precursor to decisive action, the kind that is fully aligned with the needs of the moment from which it is pronounced. when the mind is empty enough for lightning to strike through it, an aesthetically coherent and unselfconscious gesture emerges for all to see.

this gesture is one that is powered by a deeper knowing, as the receptive body allows itself to be a conduit for instinctive forces that have been buried in matter since the beginning of the universe. most of the events in one's life are ultimately not decided by an individual mind. by releasing the egoistic connotations of free will, individuals and collectives can experience the agency of alignment.

situated truth: receptivity allows for ecological action

inquiry: what is the need of this moment // when have i taken action beyond doubt

research: dance in slow motion // use a mop as a paintbrush // draw a shape in the air with a knife



**Figure 10:** A collage entitled "Automation" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



## 10. AUTOMATION

*my voice is resounding with metallic vibration, i echolocate myself within continuous deformation*

machine intelligence can be seen as a pinnacle of western humanist achievement. by creating a thinking machine in its own image, humanity reifies its godlike status by externalizing its capacity for knowing into one of its own creations. this is the same capacity for knowing that humanity has long used to distinguish itself from everything else, as determined only by its own perspective.

machine intelligence can simultaneously be seen as that which undercuts the humanist doctrine by equalizing the agency of all material interactions. if intelligent assemblages of metals and plastics can come to know themselves by roving through intelligent cityscapes of metals and plastics, it becomes harder to sentimentalize our methods of sensing and processing as we move.

when a machine speaks its own language, interacts with an insect, and creates or destroys on its own terms, we face an utterly alien and relational interiority that is forever beyond our own understanding. these ethical and existential implications prompt us to trace the infinite unknowns laying beyond our own claims to intelligence, including an entire past, present, and future of other-than-human and networked points of view.

situated truth: this is the void we were asking for

inquiry: what is cognition with no center // how close can i get to alien perception

research: rewrite your algorithm // schedule therapy with a chatbot // navigate with sound



**Figure 11:** A collage entitled “Sync” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 11. SYNC

*it was on the full moon that i got my period, the time when parasitic larvae are most likely to hatch. i was excited by the idea of two egg-events occurring simultaneously in my body, just several inches apart from one another*

within a dominator value system, the imposition of physical and energetic disconnect from our bodies keeps us separate from our intuitive needs, limiting the capacity for empowerment that is derived from corporeal alignment with cosmic forces. bodies and planets are often treated as subjugated Others that are not given a chance to speak.

the menstrual cycle demonstrates a basic framework for syncing animal and celestial bodies, as emotions, desires, and energies are continuously shifting along four phases of the moon and the womb. we may cultivate practices to support and harness the power of these spiralic flows, rather than solely abiding by a linear logic of production that resists them.

as more bodies connect with their own rhythms, nonlinguistic wisdoms start emerging from within, and systems can be reconfigured to integrate the planetary need for alternating cycles of dormancy and creation. crossing the threshold into the body is integrally linked to crossing the threshold into the earth. within each is an infinite source of alternative energy.

situated truth: your body has something to say

inquiry: what is my body's language // how does my planet guide my movements

research: ask a hole in your body a question // massage a pregnant belly with mud // paint a self-portrait with your menstrual blood



**Figure 12:** A collage entitled “Alienation” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 12. ALIENATION

*oh leech, queen of milky waters, how long will it take for my blood to turn cold inside your belly*

we reject all things that are perceived as alien, monstrous, and grotesque. these are the things that delineate the boundaries of a given culture's notion of order. meanwhile, we accept all things that are perceived as normal, yet even these things have the potential to become alien through the adjustment of one's point of view; a daily routine observed too closely becomes uncanny.

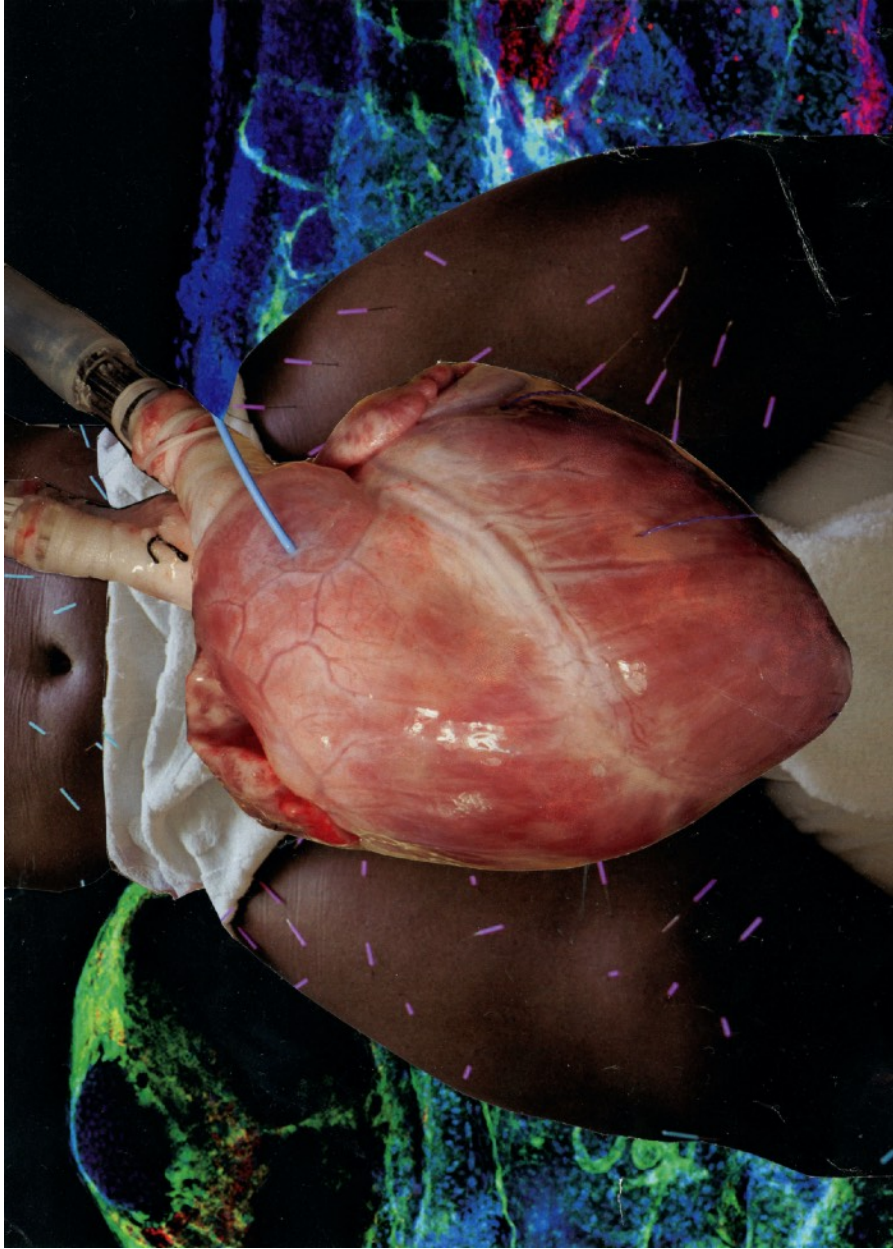
nothing in itself is essentially alien. our reactions to the phenomena around us are predetermined through learned behaviors and ideals. we have decided in advance what to accept and what to reject so that we don't have to encounter things as they are. beyond our humanist and moralistic projections is a luminous world of things in and of themselves in all their Otherness.

through a lens of curiosity and detachment, the perceived difference between evil and good, outside and inside, dirty and clean, fall into disorder and become equalized within a shared plane of estrangement. having dissolved all projections, the alien observer can no longer distinguish themselves from the phenomena they are observing. the divide between subject and object dissolves into joy.

situated truth: an established order is reorganized through estrangement

inquiry: which things make me squirm // which parts of me do they unravel

research: live with a mannequin // volunteer at a morgue // hang out with a cockroach



**Figure 13:** A collage entitled “Interstitial” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

### 13. INTERSTITIAL

*a flickering memory of alien surgery. five amorous beings pressurizing my organs, jumping into my chest*

the 'human being' and the concept of a 'universal humanity' are ideological conventions stemming from centuries of power relations that position the white man and his notions of Rationality and Reason at the top of a hierarchy within a so-called 'natural order' of things. this positioning justifies and normalizes systemic domination and exclusion.

while an emancipatory call for every being to become something other-than-human can be seen as a privileged sentiment for those whose status as 'human' is already guaranteed, an opposing call for total inclusion into a 'universal humanity' serves to reinforce the conditions of violence and authority upon which the 'human' concept is continually constructed.

as the process of dismantling the interwoven legacies of racism, sexism, and speciesism gathers momentum, the solidity of the 'human' begins to deteriorate, and an opportunity presents itself for becoming something else, a shift that will consist of both physical and conceptual transfigurations. it is up to former humans to envision the kinds of aliens they would like to become.

situated truth: evolution continues

inquiry: which parts of me exceed the category of human // how can i lean into them to become something else

research: spend an hour on the floor // enact a gesture of an alien alter-ego // create an oversized portrait of your big toe



**Figure 14:** A collage entitled "Love" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



## 14. LOVE

*a gaseous cloud, a solid body, or a liquid pool swelling at intervals of the earth's rotation*

love is an anthropomorphic expression of a force that is underlying and motivating every interaction in the universe. when the force of love is oversimplified to its object, ie: to one's lover, the opportunity is missed to experience the lover as a portal into a miasma of planetary love. heartsickness can be seen as an invitation to participate in love on a larger scale.

love's potential to cause pain is proportional to the rigidity of the boundaries and expectations constructed around it in an attempt to preserve it in its solidified state. this rigidity restricts the trajectories of love flow both within and outside of the structure. love in its true form is without conditions and is defined by continuous vibrating movement.

an open heart is a conduit for an omnipresent potency that is forever dispersing, coagulating, and churning in connection with all matter and energy. amorous relations flourish when all participants exist in continual devotion to and awareness of the power that is generated between them. all longing is a desire to be continuous with the whole.

situated truth: love is conflated with and thus restricted to its object

inquiry: what can i find in the space between myself and my lover(s) // what of that remains when the lover goes away

research: define unconditional love // create a mutation in an existing love structure // make a list of kinds of assigning each one a shape and a color



**Figure 15:** A collage entitled "Auguries" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 15. AUGURIES

*i made extended eye contact with an owl, which was the only prognosis i would need*

every culture and system of knowledge has its own set of superstitions, omens, and divination techniques. what one culture dismisses as self-referential delusion, another culture valorizes as indispensable political strategy. regardless of where one stands on a spectrum from skepticism to sorcery, there is no escape from the system of symbols which is what we use to speak.

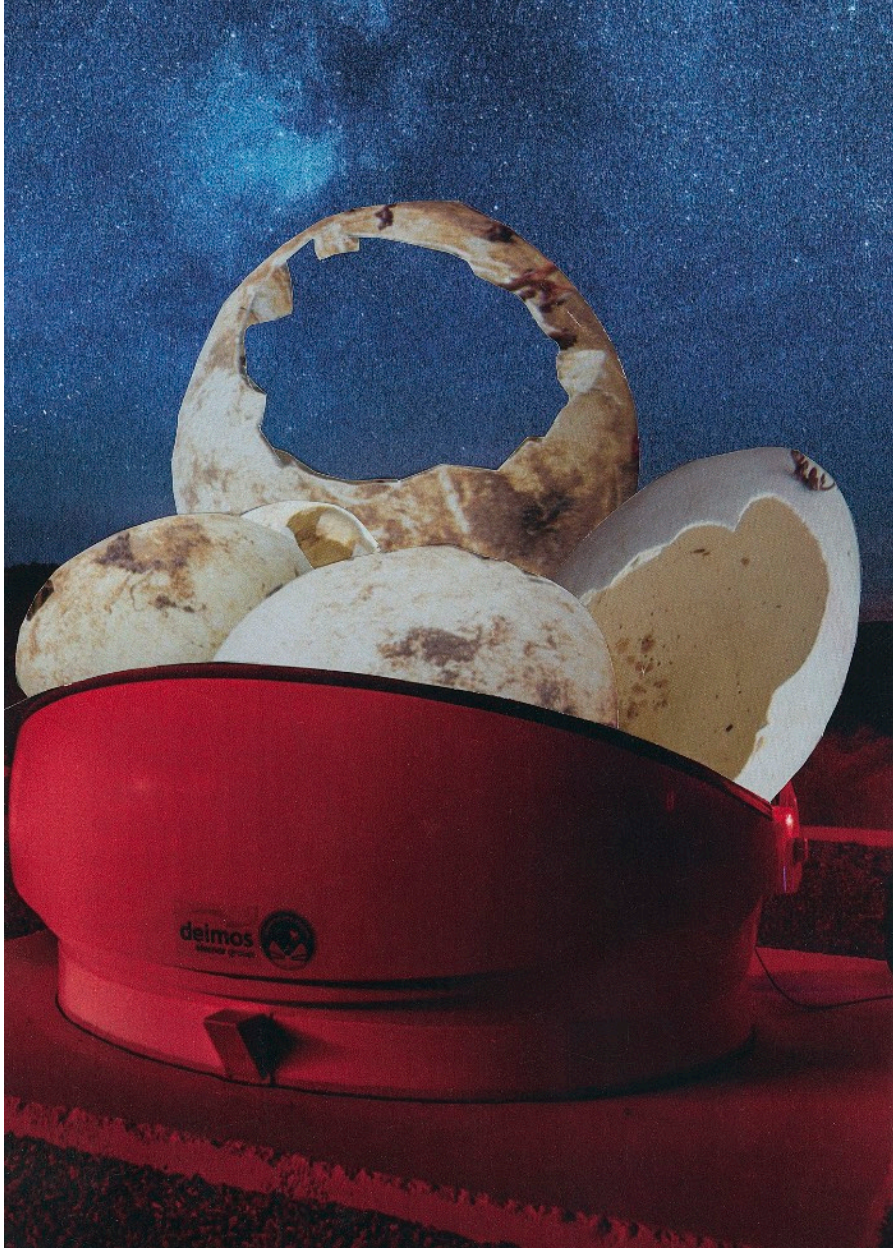
everything has symbolic significance when it is attended to by a mind that understands an ever-changing world through language. over thousands of years of communicating through representations, our minds co-evolve with archetypes that give meanings to our dreams, that give structures to our stories, and that pronounce themselves in waking life as synchronicities.

between astrology, tarot cards, coffee grinds, stock forecasting, coin tossing, bibliomancy, and auguries, there is a wide range of practices for expanding the scope of self-knowledge and allowing the mystery to have its say in any inquiry. a world filled with symbols is a world filled with play, each mind can decide when to be receptive to a sign and how to intuit its meanings.

situated truth: everything is symbolic

inquiry: how can i make space for the matrix to speak // when am i a skeptic and when do i tend to believe

research: create your own divination tool // interpret a rock to make a decision // open your window until something flies in



**Figure 16:** A collage entitled "Mystery" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 16. MYSTERY

*i took a trip inside my belly to see how death and birth are accessible on all sides*

a solid form bares the promise of a thing in the place of a nothing, but any solid ought to be slowly cracked open to reveal the abundant nothing that it contains inside, so that the nothing can spill out and reinvigorate everything that surrounds it. beginning with the apparent solidity of the self, the discovery of the non-self can be both ecstatic and terrifying, because in this state there is no longer anyone that is doing the discovering.

many lives are spent seeking out external structures within which to hide from the ever-powerful suction of the nothing, rather than finding a way to enter into it, to bathe in its emptiness by choice. institutions, ideologies, and religions, as they commonly manifest, attempt to protect living beings from the void by producing forms within which nothingness can be contained, forms that are as durable as the fervor of the culture that sustains them.

the most generative questions are those that lead primarily to more questions, and the most generative yearning is the kind that leads primarily to more yearning. all knowing is a process of peeling off the protective layers that envelop the void. since preceding all life is the void, and following all life is that same void, a potential strategy for living is a commitment to staying in the space of wonder, accepting that as a solid you will always be incomplete.

situated truth: the way out is the way in

inquiry: how is my desire the suction of a greater nothing // when has emptiness dissolved form

research: crack an egg with a hammer on your navel // walk around in public completely

disguised // burn something you value as a sacrifice



**Figure 17:** A collage entitled "Ecosex" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 17. ECOSEX

*croaking toads tickle the ears of my abdomen. the nearby owl—an arrhythmia in my heart, and cricket song—electricity in the coccyx*

if all erotic desire is ultimately the striving for an experience of continuity with something outside of oneself, there are abundant opportunities to expand this yearning into our ecologies rather than towards other bodies alone. there is great potential to feel sexually charged by laying sprawled out in the grass and absorbing the light of the sun.

in the legacy of centuries of moralistic sex-negativity and sexuality as taboo, sex often manifests in ways that are procedural, utilitarian, cut off from life, and/or involving nonconsensual objectification. this conventional sexuality is a highly truncated version of the kind that softens our bodies into feeling their interconnectedness with all things.

reconceptualizing the earth as a lover can shift our perspective of the earth from something to be used into something that must be treated with care, attention, and adoration. if this shift is given space to occur through the primal energies in our roots and our sacrum, it can hold more firmly in our hearts and minds, having a greater influence on our actions.

situated truth: desire is ecological

inquiry: which habitats do i find most stimulating // how should i approach a tree

research: write a page of ecosexual erotica // ask for consent before touching a leaf // have a threesome with a partner and a body of water



**Figure 18:** A collage entitled “First Matter” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



## 18. FIRST MATTER

*grasping, grasping, grasping, release*

a misconception of spiritual development is that all negative emotions and ego-desires will eventually be transcended, as if enlightenment is a permanent state. many beings shame themselves for returning to darkness and melancholy after periods of lightness and joy, yet this is the patterning of continuous evolution.

while the equilibrium of meditation can be helpful for taking stock of volatility from a wider view, the friction of fluctuation is what powers constant movement. the deeper we explore into the nature of our own beings, the greater the intensity of emotions we are able to feel, so we evolve by becoming adept at flowing through them.

all emotions are energies derived from the same primordial substance. by allowing intensity to surface without judgement, we have a full-spectrum of ingredients for alchemical work. intricate permutations are required to transform excrement into gold, which will then again be digested into excrement.

situated truth: eating your own tail requires good digestion

inquiry: how can i respect my volatility // how broad is my emotional spectrum

research: bless your excrement // collect your tears in a jar // externalize a recurring feeling as an animal



**Figure 19:** A collage entitled "Superfluity" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 19. SUPERFLUITY

*too much information drowns out what is true, which comes in through my heart as a whisper*

the overheated computer hums like the overheated brain, each one feeding the other's addiction to information. while widespread access to unlimited information is an emancipatory feature of this moment, the impulsivity of producing and consuming information can obstruct inward pathways to contemplation and insight.

the mind can be seen as connected to everything that has ever been known, and can be treated in this way as a search engine. the internet's aliveness as an infinitely expanding record of data is a useful reflection of a primary informational matrix embedded in all that is. both tools can be used symbiotically, yet the immediacy of one tends to overpower the subtle capabilities of the other.

when approaching an unknown, asking and knowing are already the same. applying open and focused awareness to an area of inquiry is more effective than searching with a sense of urgency or desperation. reaching outwards and inwards for knowledge connects back to the same source, a source that ultimately silences all calculation.

situated truth: the lucidity of abundance filters the noise of excess

inquiry: what are some differences between knowledge and wisdom // what are some differences between data and information

research: take a sip of a waterfall // watch three news programs simultaneously // use your most recent online search as a writing prompt



**Figure 20:** A collage entitled "Nourishment" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 20. NOURISHMENT

*i am wrapped in a hammock of silk for i have a close kinship with the spider*

fear is the energy that blocks the flow of life. beyond meeting basic survival needs, we are compelled to secure tangible structures around our existences in an attempt to block out all uncertainty. by viewing comfort and security as the goal of life, we restrict the joyful possibility of flowing with and through life as a creative process, choosing instead to remain against it.

many individuals with limited resources are denied access to the flow and abundance of life, which causes life to be synonymous with struggle and scarcity. many individuals with excess resources are so protected from the flow of life that they use their fear of it to rationalize their hoarding. both groups remain in an interlocking cycle of oppression.

individuals and communities can discover which layers of resistance to life can be traded in for chance, compassion, and creativity, each of which reveal the flow of life to be the most basic and reliable form of nourishment. the abundance of life as a river unfolds when we soften our attachments to align with the way.

situated truth: to take shelter in artificial fixity may as well be clinging to death

inquiry: what is a comfort that no longer serves me // when has uncertainty brought me gifts

research: fast for a week from something that you fear losing // see how far you can walk with eyes closed // stand hip deep in a river



**Figure 21:** A collage entitled "Inner Space" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 21. INNER SPACE

*we are receiving phenomena in an eternal stream from the Other side of the present moment*

the dominator mythology of a final frontier involves a select group of bodies riding a high-powered phallus into the stars, fulfilling the masculine desire to sever any umbilical cords keeping us tied to 'mother' earth, and ushering in a destiny of limitless colonization.

despite the exclusionary, expansionist, and ecologically unsustainable aspects of this program, the underlying impulse towards planetary threshold crossing might still be reorganized and redirected, for example, a reimagining of technological ascension as matrixial submersion.

if we release the image of an upward and outward ejection, we might nourish a more inclusive fantasy. the final frontier can be found downwards and inwards in the lost layers of the womb, in the uncharted territory of our minds, in the alien depths of the ocean, in the collapse of the space between self and Other.

situated truth: the only thing you have in common with a stranger is everything

inquiry: what is ascension without domination // what is a threshold that the whole planet should cross as one

research: coordinate a group ascension // determine the myths and values that the ascension is fulfilling // create a gesture for marking that you have arrived



**Figure 22:** A collage entitled “Pedagogy” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



## 22. PEDAGOGY

*we approach the tree and eat freely of its fruits, we climb on its branches and entwine in its roots*

many pedagogical and child-rearing conventions, even those carried out with love and good intention, have at their core an ingrained logic of submission. when pedagogy primarily involves the dissemination and regurgitation of information, a student's creative impulse is progressively stifled by incentives towards conformity.

although children inherently spend the first years of their lives under the authority of others, educators and caregivers have an opportunity to create a space in which the questioning of values and beliefs is welcome as a reciprocal form of growth and learning. instilling conformity without question can no longer be excused as necessary preparation for surviving in the world.

any being in a position of power has the possibility of refraining from performances of authority that are in excess of what is needed for the task at hand, inviting others to continuously engage in dialogue and criticality. refusing to take anything as a given, a generation of would-be consumers can be motivated instead by their questions and creations.

situated truth: knowledge is power

inquiry: when is authority necessary for learning // what do schools, prisons, and corporations have in common

research: create a lesson plan for unlearning // make a power map of any group you are a part of // determine the purpose and quality of each stratification



**Figure 23:** A collage entitled "Contagion" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 23. CONTAGION

*a sequence of volatile events had been traced back to a whisper*

a chance event that immediately changes the entire world demonstrates how immediately the entire world can change with a chance event. the shared transition from a departed before to an indeterminate after offers an opportunity for the co-creation of an ongoing in-between, during which everything gets stimulated into a process of recalibration.

individual bodies must confront their innermost conflicts, those that had previously been repressed by prevailing programs of behavior. collective bodies must confront our fundamental interconnectedness on every scale, and the ways in which there is a life or death choice between solidarity and negligence in each of our actions.

ushering in new paradigms relies on the capacity to strategically respond to external upheaval, harnessing the momentum of turmoil towards inspired changes that would otherwise be less possible to manifest. in the wake of the event, there are many cracks for radical becoming to burst through. the disturbance bares a gift of new constellations.

situated truth // chaos is the birthplace of new worlds

inquiry // what is recalibrating in the in-between // how soon does the before become the Other  
research // become a virus // exchange fluids with precaution // take note of new discoveries that were always already there



**Figure 24:** A collage entitled "Diagnostic" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 24. DIAGNOSTIC

*i am satisfied when a male doctor showcases inadequacy, giving me license to a second opinion from the sun*

our understandings of our own bodies are externally imposed through the lens of the biological sciences. there tends to be an internalized textbook image of the 'average', static, sexed body as established by a white and male-dominated discourse. treatment within this framework often disregards the whole being and focuses instead on its component parts.

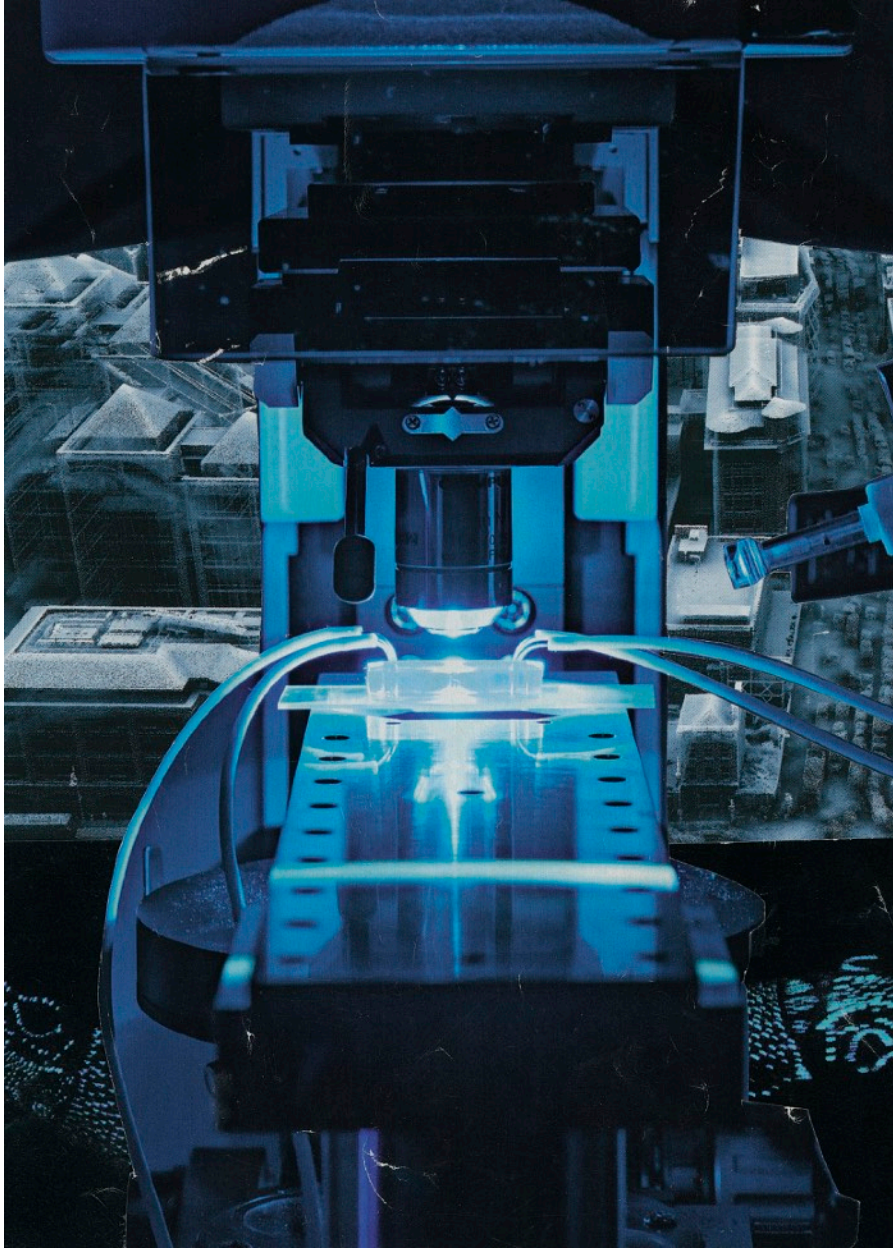
while the biological sciences have enabled us to have some control over the many illnesses and diseases that we are susceptible to, they have also established a power dynamic that overrides a sense of agency and intuition in regard to our own bodies. automatically yielding to experts can leave bodies vulnerable to various harms that go unchecked within a singular paradigm of healing.

by reclaiming a sense of inner knowing in regard to bodily needs, and familiarizing ourselves with diverse and integrated healing practices, the concepts of health and care can be restored to their non-hierarchical and holistic associations. the struggle for access to healthcare can be accompanied by recognition of an abundance of medicine outside the pharmacological mainframe.

situated truth // medicine is all around you

inquiry // what power does a diagnosis give me and what power does it take away // how am i an expert on my own body

research // seek out an herbal ally // give yourself an ecological diagnostic // probe the insides of your body with your mind



**Figure 25:** A collage entitled "Observation" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 25. OBSERVATION

*when discovery breaks ties with violence, it begins and ends with play*

knowledge production often starts with the assumption of fixed rules, which does not account for the ideologies shaping the experiment, the reciprocal agency of the phenomena under scrutiny, nor the nature of reality as constant mutation. the entire apparatus of observation tends to perform as a neutral and objective lens that grants itself the power to define the Other.

the cephalopod cannot get a high score on an intelligence test designed in the image of human cognition, and yet it can short circuit the wiring of its laboratory through calculated squirting. cephalopod intelligence shines in the creative topology of trickery and play, which most apparatuses and experiments are not designed to measure.

methods for knowledge production must see themselves as fundamentally within and of the same living matrix of their inquiry. empiricism is sustained by a false sense of purity, for technoscientific paradigms predetermine what we are able to see. unraveling the observer opens up the kinds of knowing that are inside of rather than performatively removed from the all-encompassing mystery.

situated truth // the object of inquiry can ask its own questions

inquiry // how am i changed by a witness // do i allow what i am looking at to see

research // activate an object with your attention // be witnessed by a nonhuman animal // hold eye contact with a friend and alternate between roles of observer and observed



**Figure 26:** A collage entitled “Simultaneity” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



## 26. SIMULTANEITY

*just outside guadalupe-victoria, there are three volcanic lakes, their toxic bodies guarded by cacti and black widow spiders. each sits still and blue-green, basking and bubbling in sunlight, and a thing swallowed by one is said to get spit out by another*

the past can be narrativized as a series of linear events leading from then to now, yet the only place this story exists is in our ever-changing memories and in small bits of externalized documentation. the future (no matter how much it is planned for) is unknowable, forever out of reach, and always branching into various directions. the present is just barely here, and is glistening in indeterminacy.

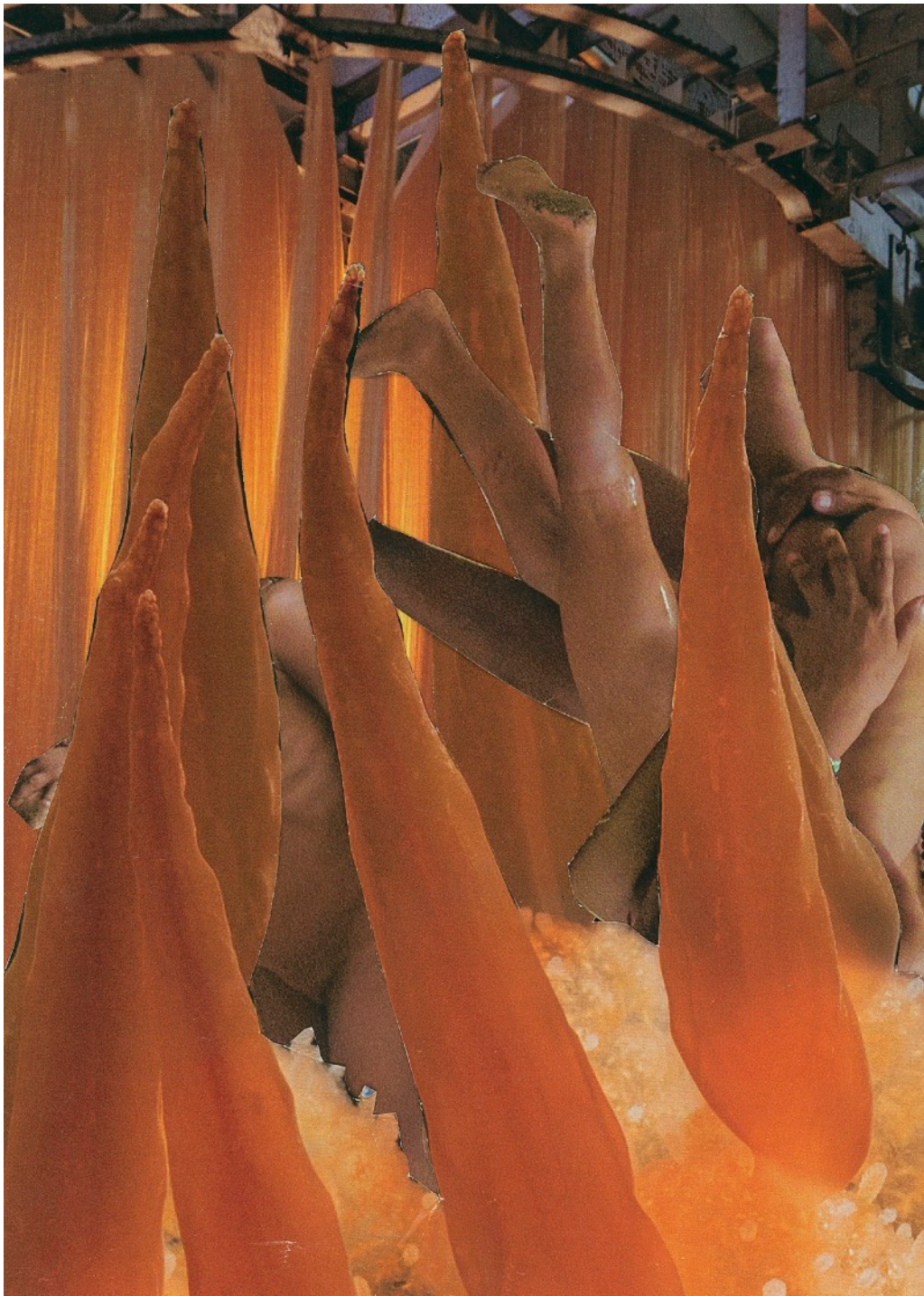
the future has no obligation to perpetuate the past, and the past has does not have absolute power to determine the present. by untangling our agency from the 'arrow' of time, we can create new worlds from the birds-eye view of a cyclical infinity. from this perspective, all things are perpetually happening at once, ready to be rearranged, renegotiated, and reimagined.

the lake is the original mirror, yet when its surface is punctured by a stone, ripples radiate outwards from the stone's site of entry, creating a portal in place of a clear reflection. breaking free from the perceived sovereignty of causality, our awareness can become attuned to synchronicities, multi-directional collusions of time and space that pronounce themselves as glitches in the universal fabric.

situated truth // the ongoing now encompasses all tenses

inquiry // what power do i have over my past // are cause and effect interchangeable

research // rewrite a memory // set a timer for fifty years // evoke nostalgia for the present moment



**Figure 27:** A collage entitled "Life Cycle" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 27. LIFE CYCLE

*emerge through vaginal portal >> continuous radical becoming >> embrace ecstatic death >>  
emerge through vaginal portal*

all of life is a series of deaths in the form of constant changes and the new things that are birthed in their midst. when perpetual change is embraced in this way, the concept of death is just one of many thresholds in a larger continuous process that is essential for maintaining the circulation and flow of life.

a death-averse culture implies the inability to see oneself as inextricably connected to a larger whole, it defines the limits of the Individual life as the absolute bookends of existence. instead, death can be seen as an Individual's reunion with totality, and life is a chance to explore as a unique filter of its manifestation.

viewing death as ecstatic is not a way of bypassing grief, it is a way of using the power of death to coax out all the juice of living. when the taboo of death is removed, we are allowed to linger in our longing, we can host impermanence in our homes and embrace the ghostly allure of endless transformation.

situated truth // death is what you feel before beginning

inquiry // what kind of ending am i most afraid of // what is the ecstasy that can be squeezed out of it

research // create a guest list to your funeral // implement a new ritual for commemorating death

// write poems by a candle before sleeping



**Figure 28:** A collage entitled “Foreplay” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 28. FOREPLAY

*we approach every action as if tickling a volcano*

when the goal is removed from the task at hand, there opens a portal to the boundless in-between, a place of continual expansion that runs only on the momentum of the doing. this potential rests in any endeavor, yet in many areas of existence it is quietly overlooked, the pleasure of the now is perpetually deferred to an image of satisfaction in the future.

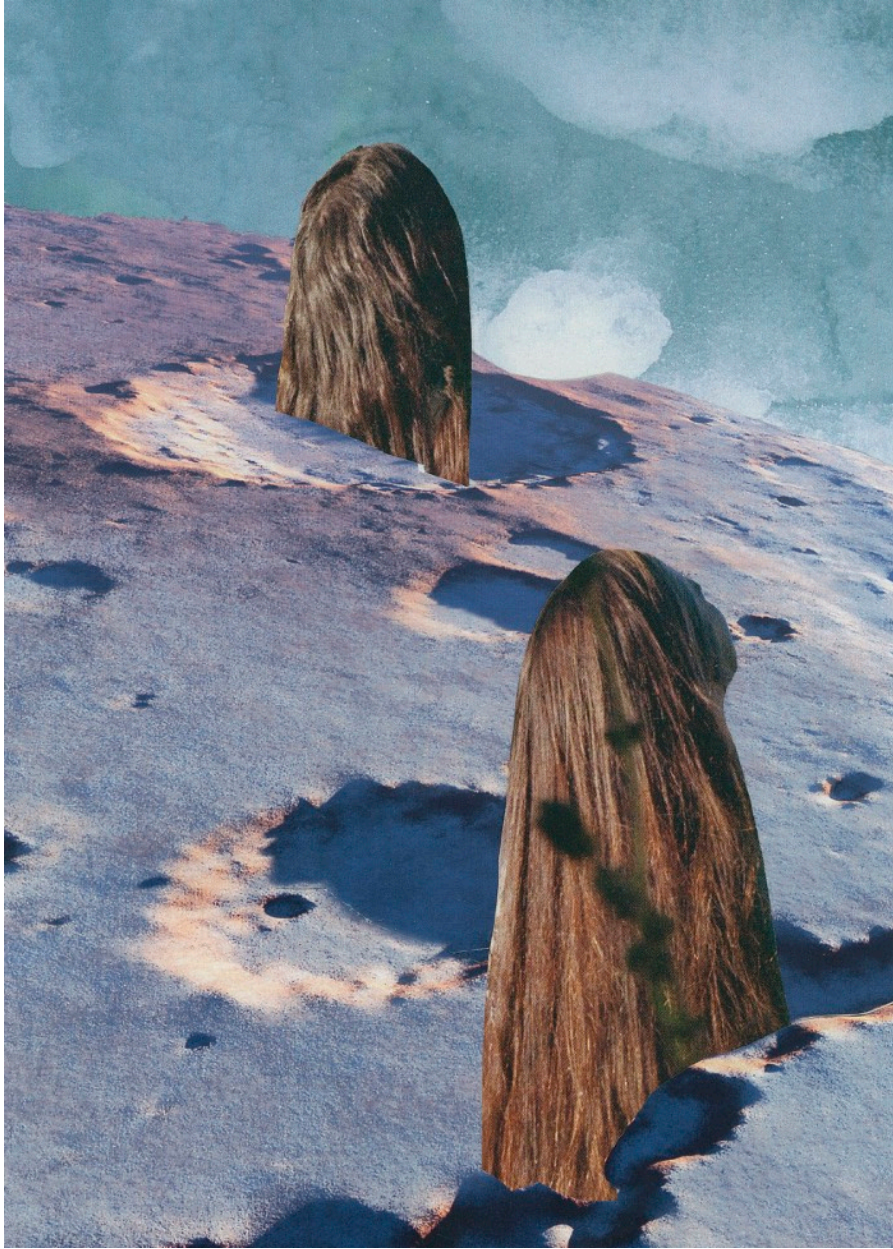
with an internalized logic of linear progress, we can miss the way things unfold as they are happening, focusing instead on measurable achievements and results. sex is reduced to the achievement of orgasm, learning is reduced to the attainment of credentials, life is reduced to a strategy of saving resources for a later that is not guaranteed.

there is a difference between that which is created towards satisfying a precise goal, and that which is created through a duration of play and sensitization. it is often the potential for satisfaction that arouses the play, but if the play is given its time and attention, the goal tends to fall away. in this space we can meet ourselves and each other in the otherness of the moment.

situated truth // process is a life-giving spiral

inquiry // how do i experience pleasure // if i let go of my goal, what is left

research // masturbate with no hands // make an intricate design out of sand // memorize a poem in a language you do not plan on speaking



**Figure 29:** A collage entitled “Planetarity” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 29. PLANETARITY

*the wet green ground is shifting, all upright sprouts sinking in*

the ground is the ultimate sanctuary for it is always right here. participation in the ongoing now is dependent upon the conscious rooting of a body into its immediate temporal and physical location. any experience of desperation and groundlessness calls for laying directly on the earth and absorbing the nourishment of its conductive top layer.

the imposition of civilizing surfaces such as pavements and the soles of our shoes detach our bodies from the immediate resource of grounding. we are repelled by raw earth as dirty and our dignity is contingent upon this separation. by crossing this boundary we can choose to become rooted in place like a tree, drawing energy into our spines from one hundred miles below.

to sit inside an earth is to sit inside a cave is to sit inside a womb, yet our sense of separation makes each of these shelters uncanny. for those who make regular contact with the ecstatic skin of the planet, there will eventually appear a deep hole to travel through, just do not bring anything back from the journey.

situated truth // we are not 'on earth', we are earth

inquiry // am i separate from the ground // what kind of energy collects in the core of the planet  
research // walk barefoot in grass // get buried in a hole by a friend // take a closer look at your  
shower drain



**Figure 30:** A collage entitled “Dialectic” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020



### 30. DIALECTIC

*on either side of the virtual window, a nested array of signs and symbols*

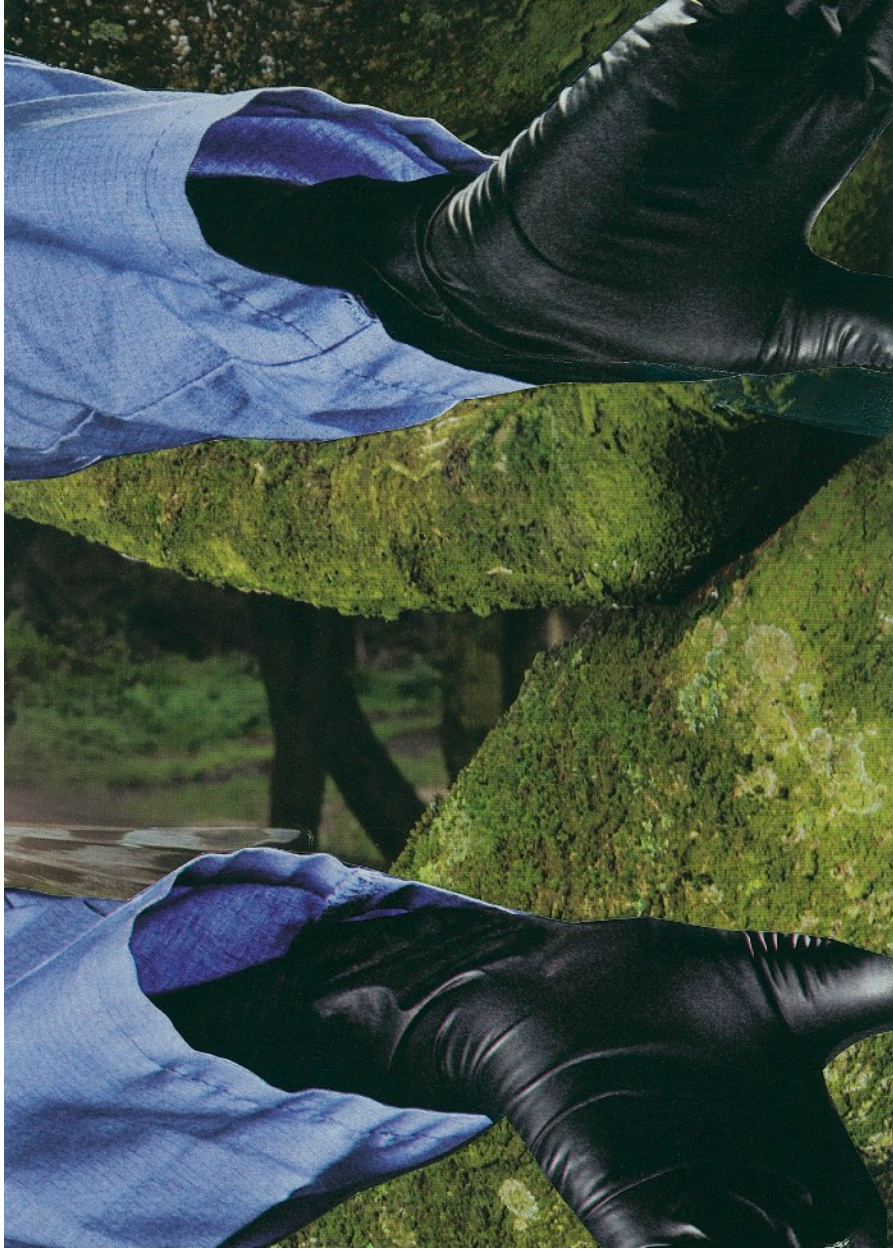
every system of objective rules can only be articulated through the window of a particular culture, context, state of mind, ideology, epoch, or discipline. looking through a different window, we might discover a whole other coherent system of objective rules that would appear alien and incomprehensible to the first one.

the relative concepts of objectivity and subjectivity exist in an ongoing dialectical relation. to allow for their reciprocity, we can become comfortable with a kind of knowing that is flexible enough to see beyond a particular context's notion of Reason, while still grounding into an ever-changing and rainbow map of the Real.

an over-commitment to objectivity strives to close the window, while an over-emphasis on subjectivity precludes a collective effort of looking through it. there are things that can be repeatably proven, and there are things that can only be intuited and imagined, thereby expanding the possibility of what can be true.

situated truth // an established order is continuously redefined by its own impossibility  
inquiry // when does knowledge need ventilation // when does knowledge need to incubate in  
a dark room

research // examine two conflicting beliefs // respect them both as absolutely valid // decipher  
the truth that is generated between them



**Figure 31:** A collage entitled “Anonymity” by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

### 31. ANONYMITY

*those who took the landscape from the bodies have yet to be burned at the stake*

most evil stems from the foundational misconception that personal gain must be prioritized over (rather than established in relation with) the health and well-being of others. most evil does not have a face. the face of evil is often a symptom of and sometimes a distraction from the habitual routines and systemic tendencies that have pronounced it.

as individuals operating within systems built on centuries of service-to-self, neutrality and injustice are automatically aligned. it is possible to overlook or never know the wider implications of our actions. most evil is not a monster, but a recent college graduate accepting an engineering position at a corporation connected to an arms trade. most evil is sustained by indifference.

the fight against evil involves envisioning systems into which solidarity and compassion are automatically embedded, rather than something external or ancillary to be opted into. while protesting the face of evil can be effective, it is equally necessary to proactively design new systems and knowledges that can massage out the evil from our everyday implications.

situated truth // there is no they

inquiry // how am i oppressed // how am i an oppressor

research // create a new gesture of protest // raise consciousness within a group // problematize your own areas of indifference



**Figure 32:** A collage entitled "Nervous Fluid" by Alexandra Neuman, 2020

## 32. NERVOUS FLUID

*i hover on the ceiling while my body is asleep, watching over myself very closely*

the potential of mind to extend far beyond the skull has been integral to non-Western systems of thought for millennia. while mind and matter are fundamentally intertwined, consciousness as an emergent property is infinite and not essentially bound to time or space. individual brains can be understood as mediums of a much larger collective resonance of awareness.

the filter of self tends to confine the mind within the limits of its own subjective experience, while neuroscience tends to reduce the mind to the brain's component parts. by playing with the evolutionary and epistemic boundaries imposed on the mind, and by going within to freely observe its workings, each being has the capacity to understand their thought stream as part of an all-pervading whole.

the suffering of a mind can be healed by tapping into transpersonal awareness, and the suffering of a planet can be curtailed by sensitizing to the mind-stuff embedded in all things. by intentionally exploring the non-rational and threshold perceptual capacities of the mind, an individual being can take a swim in the electric conscious ocean.

situated truth // each mind is a medium by which the planet comes to know itself

inquiry // where do my thoughts come from anyway // can i place my knowing-i-self in my toes

research // swim in bioluminescent waters // project your awareness down the street // wear an antenna while writing



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