

# The Peace Chronicle

Magazine of the Peace and  
Justice Studies Association

## Re-Enchantment



# PEACE CHRONICLE

The Magazine of the Peace and Justice Studies Association

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# Table of Contents

1. Letter from the Editor .....	Vanessa Meng
4. Contributors	
11. Biophilia (Youth Contest) .....	Kasey Rhodes
13. (Re)enchanted Education: Teaching as Magical Praxis.....	Stephanie Knox Steiner
22. Look Up .....	Meena Chen
23. The Acorn (Youth Contest) .....	Sky Tosheng
25. The Land of Enchantment .....	Libby Hoffenberg
34. Wind the Majestic Temple (Youth Contest).....	Derek Meng
36. Enchantment with the Earth: Interview with Soul Fire Farm .....	Various
40. De-Deforestation (Youth Contest).....	Heather Chang
46. What are we really doing with generative AI?.....	Sylvan Racker
49. Notes from Yesterday (Youth Contest).....	Raleigh Rhodes
50. Inwood Park After the Rain.....	Leonard Cicio
51. The Door in the Rock.....	Janet Gerson
59. Heart of the Forest (Youth Contest) .....	Brendan Shen
62. Art Allows a Kind of Attention: Interview with Maisie Luo.....	Various
68. Monarch (Youth Contest) .....	Kasey Rhodes
69. The Power of “What If?”: An Interview with E.D.E. Bell .....	Gabriel Ertsgaard
72. Fill the World with Magic (Youth Contest) .....	Sofia Marri
74. Something I Forgot & Something I Remember .....	Meena Chen
77. Inexhaustible Wonder: An Interview with Michael Fox .....	Rashad Rehman
81. The Gift at My Door .....	Riham Alziz Eldin

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## PEACE CHRONICLE

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82. Trust-Fall: Crafting a Re-Enchanted Present ..... Emma Lovejoy
86. L'ultimo giorgio ..... Cora Allison
88. Kindness (Youth Contest) ..... Cadence Liu
90. Fighting Against Climate Change to Build Positive Peace..... Brian Zhen Li
98. Mother Tree (Youth Contest) ..... Derek Meng
99. A Courageous Woman ..... Ariana Rastelli
102. Indian Jasmine..... Riham Aziz Eldin
103. Ontological Enchantment: Rekindling Rootedness in a Ravaged World Randall Amster
107. Unfinished Thoughts on Melancholia and Mourning ..... Afriti Bankwalla
109. Allow Me to Return Home ..... Juhi Adhikari
113. Awakened..... Daniel Rudolph
114. Rise of the Waves..... Leonard Cicio
115. The Wellsprings of Rest..... Rossanah Gosser
121. Returning..... Meena Chen
122. Potato Leaf (Youth Contest..... Nolan Meng
-

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# Letter from the Editor

VANESSA MENG A.K.A MS. BUTTERFLY



Welcome,

It has been a great pleasure to work as the guest editor for this lovely community and chronicle. I feel blessed to have been able to create so many wonderful relations and deepen old ones through a theme that has been near and dear to my heart. This issue was born out of many story arcs, most notably at the PJSJA conference in Alliance Ohio in 2022. I did a workshop on using metaphors as a way to Re-Enchant the world, it inspired many exciting conversations and joyous co-creations with new friends that are also now contributors to this issue like Janet Gerson and Randall Amster. So when I was in line next to Wim Laven for dinner and the conversation of guest

came up, I was still riding from that hopeful high, and it felt only natural to propose the theme Re-Enchantment.

I graduated in 2020 from Swarthmore College, which is to say, I emerged from a highly academic liberal arts education in a time of chaos. I was able to see how the intersecting crises of Covid, colonialism, whiteness, geo-politics, patriarchy, violence and capitalism were interwoven. The painful separations of the world were dramatically clear, slick oil rising to the surface of water, and like Production Manager Emma Lovejoy writes in their article, it was immensely difficult to navigate the first steps of adulthood in this time. But

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as Arundhati Roy said, it was a portal, and I knew I wanted to step lightly into the new world. I saw the time as an opportunity for me to live the way I believed in. Re-Enchantment was a personal mission that I have dedicated my life to in my sophomore year of college, and I spent much of my studies in Philosophy and Peace and Conflict Studies intellectually considering the question of what that would mean. How can we, like Grace Lee Boggs asks, live in community, live intergenerationally? How can we, like Alexis Pauline Gumbs presents live Undrowned? Upon graduating, after not being able to go to what I thought was my dream job as an assistant curator for the Madre in Naples Italy, I realized that I needed to live in a re-enchanted way, and create the world I wanted to live in with the life that I had around me.

This was not an easy task, and as artist Maisie Luo and fellow Swarthmore alum said in our interview, "re-enchancement is not the wave of a wand, it is hard work." It requires the courage to stand up against the norms, it requires courage to speak the truth about how one feels, and it requires courage to live in the present and build meaningful relationships in a world constructed on the bedrock of Cartesian separation. I feel extremely blessed to have been able to create a life in community, and one that exists outside of the structures that felt imposing. I have taken the leap of faith and sometimes that can feel isolating. So I am so grateful for this opportunity to share the idea, to hear and learn from others on what the word

could invoke and deepen my own understanding of what Re-Enchantment could look like.

This issue has a vast span of perspectives with strands of threads braiding it together; from personal stories, to poetry and artworks that enchant the human experiences of life, to more academic discussions on faith, creation, grassroots peace building, to practical processes of creating harmony with the Earth and each other or how we can understand AI, to imaginative fiction from children, this issue offers hope for a collective future. Excitingly this issue also includes the Peace Chronicle's first ever poetry and writing contest for youth around the world.

It was a magical experience for me to see the strands that were talking to one another from across disciplines, generations, and countries. Like mycelium; a network of mushrooms that are always in conversation out of sight. The youngest contributor to this issue is 9 years old and the oldest is 75, and the contributions come from Taiwan, Thailand, Nepal, Egypt, Pakistan, Costa Rica, and across the US.

Within these works is a call for faith, play, creation, rest and healing, and connection and relationship with the Earth. Some of the ideas presented intellectually are reflected in some of the people's lives in praxis, for example Randall Amster's piece on Ontological Enchantment brings up Earthseed, an intentional

farm commune started by the protagonist Octavia Butler's book "Parables of the Sower." Crysta Bloom from Soul Fire Farm sheds light on an Afro-Indigenous educational farm that values the land in an enchanted manner, and is that not like Butler's vision in real life? E.D.E Bell speaks of speculative fiction, and we see fictional works from young minds Heather Chang and Brendan Shen that ask us how it is we interact with nature. Bryan Zhen Li and Sylvan Racker look at practical ways to engage going forward through grassroots peacebuilding and AI. Stephanie Knox's powerful piece on re-enchanting education reminds us the power behind words, the power of spells and incantations, and this issue is full of beautiful poetry from around the world. So many, from Meena Chen to Michael Fox to Janet Gerson to Maisie Luo to Emma Lovejoy, and Riham Aziz Eldin speak of faith in the everyday and how we can trust ourselves. And finally many speak of healing, especially Libby Hoffenberg's personal healing in "The Land of Enchantment," Juhi Adhikari's "Allow me to return home and get more love care and support when I'm bleeding," Rossanah Gosser's dive into "The Wellspring of Rest."

The one word that I would like to uplift, and feels like it is only tacitly implied throughout the issue but not directly emphasized is Love. Perhaps it is the most difficult idea of all to grapple with, perhaps the one that we are all skirting around, but still always the word that I find myself think of after reading and understanding each piece. There is Love. And isn't that enchanting in

and of itself? There is love for the cat (see Riham Aziz Eldin), there is love for students and children, there is love in heartbreak (Cora Allison), there is love for kindness (see Cadence Liu), there is love for "The Acorn" (see Sky Tosheng), there is love for wind (see Derek Meng), there is enough love for the world to dream with her. There is self-love, there is community love, there is Great Love.

There is Love reader! Declare it with me. *There* is love! There *is* love! There is *Love*! Let that be the magic that Re-Enchants the World.

So, dear reader, thank you for coming. I invite you to read this issue with this spirit. I hope you can find something that soothes you, that entices you, that finds a space in your heart and helps create more faith in Love for you. This was created with Love, and the hope that when you walk away you might find the world a bit more Re-Enchanted.

Peace and Love,

Vanessa Meng

a.k.a Ms. Butterfly

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# Contributors



Vanessa Meng or Ms. Butterfly is an educator, healer and creator. She is an educator of writing and poetry, yoga and environmentalism. She is currently also a Master's student in Applied Psychology focusing on multicultural approaches to psychology and artistic therapy techniques. She is a spoken word poet of 10 years. She grew up in Hong Kong and Beijing, and graduated from Swarthmore College in 2020 with High Honors in Philosophy and Peace and Conflict Studies. You can see her website here [www.msbutterfly.com](http://www.msbutterfly.com).



Afriti Bankwalla is an educator, designer, writer, and curator living in New York City. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in English from the University of Chicago and a Master's in Performance Studies from New York University. Afriti enjoys writing about friendships, everyday life, and identity. Afriti has designed costumes for theatres and performers across Chicago, profiled personalities ranging from National Geographic explorers to a world-famous Beyonce impersonator, and curated an interactive virtual exhibit about bedrooms. Afriti is known among her friends for her ability to stretch the definition of "performance" so convincingly that she'll have you agreeing with statements like "when you think about it, televised sports games are basically just reality TV shows."



Daniel Rudolph is interested in exploring alternative, experiential learning opportunities for people of all ages. He is passionate about enabling community public spaces for meaningful, transformational gathering. For the last year and a half Dan has been a resident at MAPLE Monastic Academy participating in an awakened leadership training program. During this time he has continued his self-directed learning of juggling, sacred clowning and mindfulness meditation.



Rosannah Gosser is a postgraduate and freelance writer in cultural and literary studies. She received a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, where she served as Editor-in-Chief of the student-run news publication, Ke Kalahea. She recently completed a Master of Arts in English: Literatures of Engagement at Maynooth University, Ireland. Her research interests include decolonial ecology, human rights, critical race theory, and environmental humanities. Link to my website: <https://rosannahgosser.wordpress.com/>



Sylvan Racker -- Just like you - trying to understand what it means to live well. Currently a Fellow at [ToftH](#) - using philosophy, policy, art and jokes to explore how we conceptualise and shape technology and its development. Find out more or how to connect on [Sylvan's website](#).





Janet Gerson, Ed.D., Education Director, International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE); Co-Director of former Peace Education Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. Recent publications: *Reclamative Post-Conflict Justice: Democratizing Justice in the World Tribunal on Iraq* (2021) with Dale Snauwaert; “Restorative Justice & Alternative Systems” *Encyclopedia of Nonviolence, Conflict & Peace*, 3rd Ed. (2022), (Ed.) Lester Kurtz. Former dancer, choreographer & producer, through Dance Stream Inc./Janet Gerson Dance Co., produced formal concerts, free outdoor performances, and community-based arts programs. Watercolor painter, focusing on her Upper Manhattan neighborhood where she feels most transcendent, immersed in shifting light of woods, water, rocks, sky. [gerson@i-i-p-e.org](mailto:gerson@i-i-p-e.org) *Short story and essay Judge.*



Libby Hoffenberg is a visual artist, writer, and researcher. She graduated in 2020 from Swarthmore College with a major in Studio Art and honors special major in the History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine. Her work centers on practices of knowledge: the epistemological contexts of technologies and the technological contexts of epistemologies. In her painting, she explores the space between sense and nonsense, playing on the boundary between the nameable and the strange. She has worked with the Yale Center for Health Equity and studied Chinese medicine in Taiwan. She is currently a fellow at Transformations of the Human in Berkeley, California.



Riham Aziz EldinI would love to describe myself as a child- like a soul who is passionate about life as a gift, language as a joyful magic, animals as my honest companion, people as living libraries, and time as an open continuous invitation to begin again.



Stephanie Marie Knox Steiner, PhD (she/her) is Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies and Academic Coordinator of the Peace Education program at the United Nations-mandated University for Peace. She co-founded and coordinates the Jill Knox Humor for Peace Fellowship program, which offers professional development to peace studies scholars through the Humor Academy of the Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor with the intention of building peace through humor. She is a student of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, an ordained member of the Order of Interbeing, and a member of the Earth Holder Community caretaking council. She is currently enchanted by her 4-year-old daughter, the view of the sunset from her balcony, Venus and Jupiter visible in the night sky, the trees on the UPEACE campus, toucans, and the song *Dos Oruguitas* from Encanto.



Randall Amster, J.D. Ph.D., is Co-Director and Teaching Professor of Environmental Studies at Georgetown University and is the author of books including *Peace Ecology* (Routledge, 2015). Amster served as Executive Director of PJSA for many years and is still an active member.



Emma Lovejoy (they/them) is a graduate student, author, and the Production Manager for the Peace Chronicle. They received their B.A. in Social Justice Studies in 2020, from Miami University, and are currently working on their M.A. in Public History at UMASS Boston. As a writer and public historian, Emma hopes to create opportunities for others to explore their connections to people and places past and present, and to consider their own role in shaping future-history.



Cora Allison is a graduate from Berea College in Berea, Ky. where she studied peace & social justice as well as women & gender studies. Usually a non-fiction writer, she has been revisiting the intimacy and truth found in poetry and art. Her intention is to wield vibrant, creative arrangements of words for the purposes of pleasure and representation; the greatest kindness is to show someone else their experience is not in the singular. Cora plans to continue her education on implementations of restorative justice in both criminal and educational institutions.



Bryan Zhen Li is a student at New York University's Center for Global Affairs, pursuing a Masters in Global Affairs with a concentration in peacebuilding. He specializes in data analysis for global affairs and is interested in doing data analysis work for peacebuilding theory and for practice workshops. He is also working with CDA Collaborative Learning by contributing to the Environmental-Fragility-Peace Nexus Collaborative Learning Project, which aims at addressing climate change impacts or environmental change and conflict in fragile settings by developing tools and frameworks for humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development practitioners. As a Chinese student studying in the U.S. and having lived in Ghana, his unique experiences have shaped his views on governance and its role in building peace.



Every time she is asked to write one of these in the third person for some incomprehensible reason, Ariana Swann is amazed that she cannot use the last bio she wrote, because indeed things have already changed so drastically. Ariana lives at a pace that is, frankly, reckless. Along the way she has heard many an old-timer spin their tale, and a young-thang lament their troubles. She is a student of every moment, and is a huge fan of humanity. Ariana Swann was born in Caracas, Venezuela, and since then has “been everywhere, man.” She currently lives in Manhattan, KS, and is a struggling artist.

Rashad Rehman is a PhD student in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto, a Collaborative Specialist in Bioethics through the Joint Centre for Bioethics (JCB), and a Schwartz Reisman Institute for Technology & Society Graduate Fellow. His dissertation research is in pediatric bioethics.



Meena Chen is a bi-racial, Asian American, multi-media visual artist and performer whose work lies at the intersection of sustainability, spirituality, and art activism. They are a musician, dancer, and comic artist. They graduated from Swarthmore College in 2021 with a major in Environmental Studies and double minor in Religion and Dance, and center their work on healing and community building through spirituality and the arts.



Len Cicio is a draftsman, born in Brooklyn and currently living in Manhattan's last natural forest, Inwood Park. His interest in design patterns, led him to an Associate Degree at The Fashion Inst. Of Technology, in textile design where he worked 16 years in home furnishings in the NYC market. The subway, architecture and geometrical designs, are his focus. His favorite mediums are colored pencils, pen & ink, and oil pastels. [www.lcicioart.com/shop-art](http://www.lcicioart.com/shop-art).

# Youth Award Contributors

This year the Spring 2023 Peace Chronicle hosted an international poetry, short story & essay competition for youth! It was an amazing turn out, we had over 30 submissions from all four countries around the world including the US, Nepal, Thailand and Taiwan. We also had amazing judges who helped look at the works.

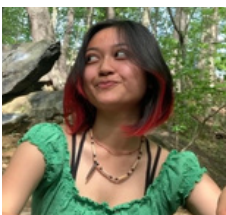
## Judges



Rachel Pastan is the author of four novels, most recently *In the Field*. Based on the life of Nobel Prize-winning geneticist Barbara McClintock, the novel was selected for the National Book Foundation's 2022 Science + Literature award. She has worked as editor-at-large at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, where she developed the popular art and museum blog Miranda, and as editor of her small-town newspaper. Pastan has taught fiction writing at the Bennington Writing Seminars MFA program, Swarthmore College, and elsewhere. She currently teaches in the MFA program at Drexel University. *Short story and essay judge.*



Susan Bucci Mockler's poetry has appeared in the *Maryland Literary Review*, *peachvelvet*, *Maximum Tilt*, *Pilgrimage Press*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Poet Lore*, *The Northern Virginia Review*, *Gargoyle*, *The Delmarva Review*, *The Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, *The Cortland Review*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Voices in Italian Americana*, and several anthologies. Her full-length poetry collection, *Covenant (With)* was published by Kelsay Books in 2022. She teaches writing at Howard University in Washington, D.C. *Poetry Judge.*



Meena Chen is a bi-racial, Asian American, multi-media visual artist and performer whose work lies at the intersection of sustainability, spirituality, and art activism. They are a musician, dancer, and comic artist. They graduated from Swarthmore College in 2021 with a major in Environmental Studies and double minor in Religion and Dance, and center their work on healing and community building through spirituality and the arts. *Short story and essay Judge.*

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Afriti Bankwalla is an educator, designer, writer, and curator living in New York City. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in English from the University of Chicago and a Master's in Performance Studies from New York University. Afriti enjoys writing about friendships, everyday life, and identity. Afriti has designed costumes for theatres and performers across Chicago, profiled personalities ranging from National Geographic explorers to a world-famous Beyonce impersonator, and curated an interactive virtual exhibit about bedrooms. Afriti is known among her friends for her ability to stretch the definition of "performance" so convincingly that she'll have you agreeing with statements like "when you think about it, televised sports games are basically just reality TV shows." *Poetry Judge.*



Ariana (they/she) is latinx and happy to be here. They are interested in translation, storytelling, and people watching. They majored in Comparative Literature and Latin American and Latinx Studies. Ariana has worked as a legal assistant in immigration law since 2020, focusing on trafficking visas, asylum cases, and clients who are at risk of deportation. They are particularly interested in discussing how immigration policy exploits immigrant trauma and how constructs of citizenship limit whose stories are legible and centered in discourse. They encourage questioning how we can continuously prioritize empathy and access in our writing (academic and non-academic alike). *Poetry Judge.*



Faith Harts has been reading, studying, and writing poetry for around 7 years. She is a free-lance writer and managing editor for a small arts magazine based in Houston, TX named “Hell of Fame”. Previously, she worked in the film industry which she stumbled into via screenwriting. Her lifelong passion and devotion is to words and all their forms. She is currently traveling through Asia; a protracted route to my new home in France.

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# Contest Contributors



My name is Cadence Liu, I am 13 years old and I am from Southern California. I am a multi-sport athlete, I play on the 14U AAA Lady Ducks hockey team, and I am about to get my second degree black belt in taekwondo. I also run cross country and track and field at school. I am currently both level 7 in clarinet and piano certificate of merit. I enjoy cooking, photography, video editing and snowboarding.



Brendan Shen is a 9 year old boy from Taiwan who loves to read books. He likes to play video games. He likes to play soccer with his friends. His favorite food is blueberry ice, it is a specialty from Taiwan.



Heather Chang is 15 years old and lives in California. She has been writing since fifth grade and likes to do art and listen to music in her free time.



Juhi Adhikari is 21 years old girl living in Kathmandu. She is a third-year Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) student at Tribhuvan University in Nepal. She is an International Youth Advisory Board Member at Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) at the University of Lincoln (UK). Currently, she is working as a youth researcher for Mobile Arts for Peace(MAP) projects at Karkhana Samuha(Nepal) and Human Rights Film Center(Nepal).



Sky Tosheng is from California, he is 11 years old and loves to collect nature.



Derek Meng is an avid eleven year old reader who loves to immerse himself in the world of fantasies and adventures. He also enjoys traveling with his family where he gets to experience the different cultures and histories from every place. He lives with his family in Los Angeles, California.

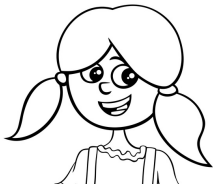
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Raleigh Rhodes was born on January 6, 2009 in Sydney Australia. In late 2012 he moved to a small homestead in east Texas. There, he and his family grow organic vegetables and fruits and raise animals. He enjoys traveling, creating art, acting, filmmaking, and of course writing. His inspirations include nature, everyday life and modern culture. He is 14 years old.



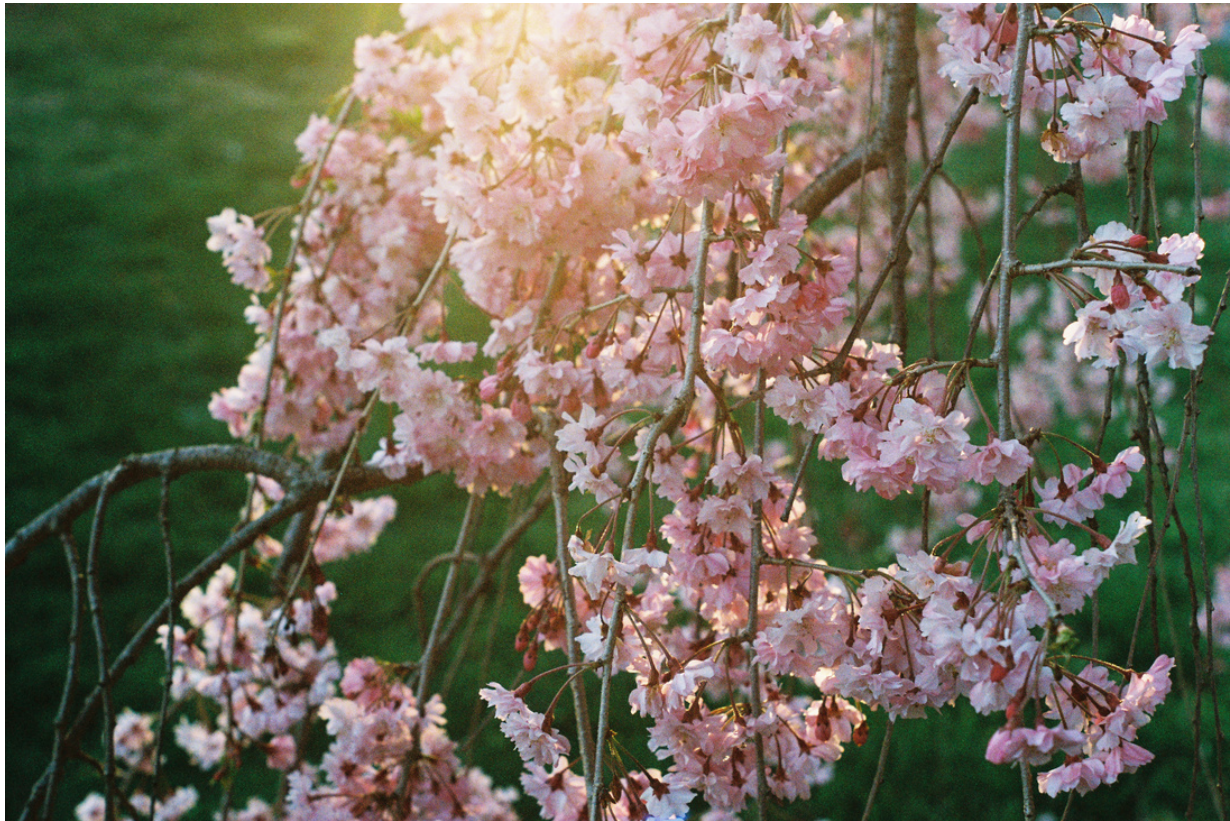
Kasey Rhodes was born in Sydney Australia in 2007. In 2012 her family moved to Texas, where they began a life growing their own food in connection with nature. Kasey has been surrounded by poetry for her whole life and loves its ability to inspire and connect. Much of Kasey's poetry plays upon the idea of interconnection and is inspired by nature, beauty, spirituality and reflection. Kasey is a published poet and has won awards in several poetry contests. Besides poetry Kasey has a passion for art, wellness, holistic nutrition and cooking, music, travel and continuously learning and experiencing new things.



Sofia Marri is a Year 7 student at Nist International School in Bangkok. She was born in Islamabad, Pakistan in 2011 and has lived in Rome, and Beijing, before moving to Thailand with her family in 2022. Her uncle, a poet, and her English teacher inspired her among others. In her free time, Sofia reads, writes, and does sports; she continues to write poems and stories and her passion for writing keeps growing.



Nolan Meng is a witty nine year old who enjoys playing board games with his family. He has great imaginations and loves to create things through legos, arts and crafts. He also loves playing basketball with friends and his dad. Nolan lives with his family in Los Angeles, California.



Vanessa Meng, Cherry Willows at Home, 35mm Film

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# biophilia

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST 1ST PLACE  
KASEY RHODES, 16, TEXAS USA

a friendship formed in giving  
shielded by muted, dusty tones and speckled green  
flourishing in the pursuit of rich sweetness  
singing together in harmony  
shielded by muted, dusty tones and speckled green  
traveling as one, throats raw with smoke, still hopeful  
singing together in harmony  
straining to hear the sound of bees  
traveling as one, throats raw with smoke, still hopeful  
selflessly helping the other  
straining to hear the sound of bees  
walking a path generations old  
selflessly helping the other  
flourishing in the pursuit of rich sweetness  
walking a path generations old  
a friendship formed in giving

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# (Re)enchanted Education: Teaching as Magical Praxis

STEPHANIE MARIE KNOX STEINER

"What is the next best step on my vocational path that is calling me as I am calling it?" I asked my planet, which was a rainbow prism sparkle joy planet.

"You need to do something more magical than that," said my planet, that being higher education.

This dialogue with my imaginary planet took place during a theatre playshop during the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) 2022 Mexico, a magical portal in space-time on weaving intercultural peace learning. After being guided through a visualization in which we imagined a planet, we then asked our planet questions and engaged in dialogue with them through journaling. You need to do something that lets you live on a

magical rainbow prism sparkle planet, that honors and channels the synchronicities that you keep having, my planet told me. Keep following the magic, follow the joy, and it will lead you there, like a rainbow path. Trust in each step. Your path is unfolding beautifully. Trust, surrender, give thanks. Trust, surrender. Keep loving life and it will love you back.

When I arrived at IIPE, I had just successfully defended my dissertation, which was about (re)orienting education toward serving life (Knox Steiner, 2022a), and was deliberating about my next steps. I had applied to a few academic positions and was wondering whether that was the right direction, if I could serve life in academia. If it was magical enough, if it would crush my soul, if I would be able to be my full self and truly bring my gifts.

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It turned out that higher education was indeed the next step on my path that was calling me forth, as I am teaching in the Peace and Conflict Studies Department at the University for Peace (UPEACE) in Costa Rica. This article is about how I am trying to weave magic and enchantment into my teaching praxis, or rather to see my teaching praxis as a magical act.

### **On Enchantment and Casting Spells**

Each year, as part of my solstice end-of-year review and spellcasting process, I choose a word of the year. For 2023 I chose Enchantment. Enchanté. Sometimes I like to use it as an affirmation. I am enchanted. I am enchantable.

According to The Online Etymology Dictionary (Harper, 2001-2023), the etymological roots of enchantment are to sing into, to cast a spell, to use magic. To (re)enchant education is to see teaching as magical praxis, to sing back into it, to return magic to the learning environment. Teaching and writing are to cast spells, and we need new spells for new worlds.

In my dissertation, I claim the dissertation itself as spellcasting, inspired by Natasha Myers (2020), who wrote, “We have to remember that we are living under a spell, and this spell is destroying our worlds. It’s time to cast another spell, to call other worlds into being, to conjure other worlds within

this world.” The destructive spell she is referring to can be named modernity/coloniality, the worldview, ontology, and set of worldmaking practices (a phrase I derive from Arturo Escobar) that are rooted in separation that can only be enforced through violence and destruction, such as white supremacy, cisheteropatriarchy, capitalism, ableism, etc. The new spells might be named decoloniality, might be named pluriversal, might be named otherwise (in the sense the word is used by Catherine Walsh, the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective, and others), might yet be named.

Words are a way of casting spells, and for Robin Wall Kimmerer (2013), words are a way of being in reciprocity with the world, which I believe is what spells are. They join our human experience with the more-than-human, they emit and transfer energy. They carry power and weight to affect change. In *Emergent Strategy*, adrienne maree brown (2017) talks about spells as a tool for building personal and collective resilience, healing, and transformation. I humbly offer this article as a spell, an attempt to conjure new worlds, worlds in which we remember to be enchanted.

### **The Magic of Mindfulness**

Costa Rica is utterly enchanting, an easy place to nourish one’s wonder and enchantment with life. Everywhere you turn there are vines,

hummingbirds, butterflies, flowers, maybe a monkey or toucan or iguana. There is so much enchantment available, all you really need to do is pay attention (and I do believe that is true of everywhere, it is just extra true here, where you might literally trip over it). Today two toucans flew by our classroom window, and we stopped our discussion and everyone ran to the window, utterly enchanted and delighted.

Mindfulness and enchantment are companions. They need each other. To be (re)enchanted, we have to be paying attention. If we are too busy, we will not find space for enchantment. If we are too busy, there is no space for wonder, awe, curiosity, or wonder to slip into the cracks. We need to be open to it. According to my teacher Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, mindfulness simply means the energy of bringing your full awareness to the present moment. To be enchanted requires us to be mindful, and when we are mindful, we almost can't help but be enchanted.

Bringing mindfulness into the classroom and my office space is one way I have woven this into my life in academia. In the classroom, I do this by inviting students to take some mindful breaths together at the start of each class, grounding, centering, aware of ourselves and each other and the land below and around us. We do this in a number of different ways, but even just three breaths can

offer a reset, a returning. A (re)enchanted. Even one breath.

Mindfulness practice is an invitation to enchantment, to stop, pause, notice. When we notice - really, really pay attention - it is hard not to be enchanted by everything that is around us. The leaves reflecting sunlight and blowing in the dry season breeze. The flowers on the bush just outside my office window which I regret I have barely noticed before. Even the bugs flying outside, the little cobweb that has been constructed in the corner by my desk, all potential sources of enchantment if I pause to notice.

I invite you to pause and practice with me.

After you read this passage, close your eyes and take a breath.

Notice how it feels moving in and out of your body.

Where do you feel it?

What parts of your body can you feel it moving through?

Can you allow yourself to be enchanted by the breath itself?

Now extend your awareness until you find something else to be enchanted by.

A sound, or something in your visual field, a sensation in your body, the earth beneath your feet.

That you are on a spinning ball flying through space.



Learning Altar

Stop and dwell there, allowing your attention to rest.

Offer it your attention as a gift to this object of attention.

Offer it your gratitude.

I have tried to make my office feel like a sanctuary, an enchanting place. And each day, when we both arrive, my colleague and I burn some incense or locally harvested plants we purchased from the cafe next door, listen to a few sounds of the bell together, and offer some intentions for the day.

This small act has transformed our days and brings so much peace and joy to us. It has shifted the energy of our little office suite. It helps us to serve our students better, when we begin the day with groundedness, focus, clarity, and openheartedness, entering our classrooms from a place of abundance and presence.

### **Enchantment and Interbeing**

When we feel enchanted with life, we want to care for and protect life. Our whole existence is a marvel; that I am sustained by this coffee and the water and the air from the trees and plants and the microbiome in my gut and the vegetables from the local farms that I eat and the minerals from the earth - all of it is absolutely enchanting. That “I” is hardly a lonely I, an individual. That “I” exists because of so many others, all others, I am truly an interbeing, and if I can tap into that, remember that, everything is enchanting. This enchanting, marvelous world, of which we are a tiny yet powerful part, deserves our attention and protection.

Thich Nhat Hanh also said that what we need most to save the earth is to fall back in love with the earth, and to hear the sound of the earth crying within us.

For we are the earth, and this is not an abstract or metaphorical sense at all. It is literal. And yet modernity – the destructive spell of domination – would have us believe that we are separate. Succinctly, modernity is a spell of separation, a delusion that we are separate from one another and the earth. Because it is a delusion, and it is at the foundation of modernity’s worldview and worldmaking practices. Modern formal schooling, particularly through its emphasis on individualism, perpetuates this delusion.

Thich Nhat Hanh (2012) coined the term interbeing to express the reality of our more-than-interconnectedness, which he describes as “not a theory; it is a reality that can be directly experienced by each of us at any moment in our daily lives.” The brilliance of the word interbeing is that it goes beyond the notion that we are separate and connected - rather, we exist because of and through each other. Our existence is inextricably linked, and there is no separate self to hold onto (emptiness in Buddhist terms, meaning empty of a separate self).

Academia and modern formal compulsory schooling are not environments that encourage enchantment. Schedules and deadlines (deadlines!!) proliferate and fear, so much fear. There is so much panic among students around grades and assignments. Simply the existence of grades and assignments provokes this panic that does not lend itself to learning, vitality, or enchantment, which is

very sad because learning should be grounded in enchantment, wonder, awe, curiosity. This is where learning originates, how humans evolved to learn (see Gray, 2013). Many formal educational structures today strip learning of its innate magic. Hence the (re) in (re)enchantment. Learning is inherently enchanting, and formal structures of education are disenchanting it in many ways. How might we (re)enchant learning, and view our teaching and learning praxis as magical?

### **Enchantment and honoring diverse ways of knowing**

(Re)enchanting education is a praxis of honoring diverse ways of knowing, beyond the rational and intellectual. The academy and formal schooling in the context of modernity emphasizes the intellectual and rational. An enchanted way of learning honors diverse ways of knowing, beyond (and including) the rational/intellectual, such as the intuitive, creative, embodied, and emotional ways of knowing, learning and being, of sentipensar (thinking-feeling-sensing).

One way I have actively sought to bring more enchantment here is through co-initiating a dream club on campus. This emerged organically in conversation with a student in another program, and we began meeting in January once a week to offer a space for people to share about their dreams. It naturally leads to talking about many other things, and the depth of sharing and the space we

cultivate together are deeply calming and nourishing. Actively doing collective dreamwork has opened new channels of creativity for me, including this article, and also weaves community.

Enchantment for me is magical, and magic for me is simply an active collaboration with the natural world, the more-than-human, the unseen and unseeable, with the great mystery. I do this with the moon, with astrology, with trees and other plant beings. In my classroom I do this by having a learning alter space that reminds us of the sacred act of learning and constructing knowledge together, and through my practice of facilitation.

### **Facilitation as magic**

Facilitation is a magical practice. When we engage in facilitation, we are conjuring magic. One of the principles of emergent strategy (brown, 2017) is “there is a conversation that only the people in this room right now can have. Find it.” This is the magic of facilitation - that when we hold space for possibility, we never know what might emerge, and when we hold space for the unknown, we can be delightfully surprised. And this is one of the delights and joys (and challenges!) of teaching and facilitating: that we can plan something, but we never really know how it is going to go, because the group of people is always different, and so there is always unknown.

Facilitation and teaching are also spell casting as we

### **Is the academy enchantable?**

Returning to my magical rainbow sparkle planet, what worried me about pursuing the path of academia was that magic and enchantment tend to not be welcome here. Nonrational, nonlinear ways of knowing and being and practicing are devalued by modernity which overvalues the rational, intellectual, linear. There is not often space for other ways of knowing, which are dismissed as trivial or lacking seriousness. There is often no space for dreaming. Or sometimes there is - we read an article about it - but it is frowned upon in practice, devalued.

To bring in enchantment is a disruption to the linearity of modernity that is present in the academy. To pay attention to the flower blooming on my desk is a radical act. To pause instead of just produce.

The question arises for me: Is the academy enchantable? I believe that it is, and in my experience, it is. Although this also has to do with supportive conditions in my department, my colleagues and students, the mission of my institution, the discipline and field that I teach in, and the place where I am, even my positionality as a white woman from the US, which affords me the privilege to take risks.

There is always room for enchantment in the cracks, and perhaps that is where enchantment best



Sunset at Costa Rica

lives, and where it takes us, where it takes root. I have written about this elsewhere (Knox Steiner, 2022b), inspired by many other thinkers/activists/scholars (Bayo Akomolafe, Catherine Walsh, Pachaysana Institute, the Zapatistas among them), and how our work in institutions of higher education has the potential to plant seeds in the cracks of this institution that was founded in and perpetuates modernity/coloniality.

Enchantment has its own agenda, its own energy. For when we truly begin to work and play with it, when we engage in more-than-human collaborations (for we are always engaged in such collaborations, whether we do so intentionally or attentionally or not), it will go in directions we cannot predict or explain. It will open up possibilities we could not have seen. It will have effects that we cannot see. We have to trust,

surrender, keep going, follow the path. Trust, surrender.

My sense is that yes, the academy is enchantable, and if it were left to go on, it would completely transform the academy, like the way a rainforest transforms, consumes, and takes over abandoned buildings here in the tropics. It would compost it, grow over and from it. Who knows what possibilities might emerge from its fertile composted soil. Maybe enchantment is a key to composting the modernity/coloniality of the academy. Maybe enchantment, if we devote ourselves and follow it, would allow us to compost these institutions and allow the next phase of life to grow from them. Enchantment would grow like vines around the ivory towers and bring them crumbling back down into the earth where they came from, decompose them, regenerate them into



Scan QR Code to hear Stephanie Knox read the spell

Recorded in Rio Chimuria

something new, return us to learning from and with  
and in service to the earth.

For that reason, I also sense that enchantment is  
likely to be shunned, shut down, dismissed. I  
haven't experienced this yet, thankfully, and don't  
want to invite it. For this reason I do protection  
spells and maybe I should do more, not just for  
myself, by for all of us working in these cracks. I do  
sense that we have strength in community, and  
when we find colleagues and students who we can  
practice being enchantable with, we make those  
cracks a little wider.

To close, I offer us this spell, in the spirit of  
conjuring enchantment and magic together, across  
space-time:

May we find enchantment wherever we are  
In the clicks of our keyboard,  
In the sound of birdsong outside our offices and  
classrooms.  
May our enchantment be a radical act  
Of reclaiming attention  
Of dwelling in the mundane magic of being alive on  
this precious planet  
Of remembering our interbeing  
Of remembering other ways of knowing  
Of reaching beyond what we know  
Towards wonder, curiosity, awe.  
May we feel enchantment in our bodies  
A gentle smile on the lips  
Tingling, electric  
May enchantment remind us of the deep wisdom  
communicated by our bodies in each moment.  
May our enchantment be an act of liberation  
Of institutional transformation  
May it be a pathway towards composting stuck  
destructive energy  
Towards life-affirming and life-generating ways of  
being, knowing, and living.



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# Look Up

MEENA CHEN



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# The Acorn

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST 2ND PLACE  
SKY TOSHENG, 10 CALIFORNIA USA

fumbling,  
tumbling,  
down a brown piece of bark,  
onto the soft warm park.  
sunlight blinded my eyes,  
this is my summer surprise.  
then a small and furry thing came,  
we were not the same.  
he had fur,  
and I had a hard shell that I prefer.  
he had two black eyes that stared hungrily,  
I wondered if he woke up too early.  
he snatched me up with his little hands,  
and obviously didn't listen to my command.  
he buried me deep in the ground,  
without a slight sound.  
after days and days,

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I think his head went in a maze.  
he didn't remember the spot,  
and he definitely forgot.  
as the squirrel trotted,  
a small green leaf was spotted.  
as I began to grow,  
bigger leaves began to show.  
year after year,  
I had nothing to fear.  
I was a very tough acorn tree,  
when the babies are free.  
they tumble,  
they stumble.  
down a brown piece of bark,  
onto the soft warm park.

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# The Land of Enchantment

LIBBY HOFFENBERG

Last summer, I found myself picking garlic in northern New Mexico. July came on the heels of a series of endings: leaving a new country that had just started to feel familiar, ending a course of study, the painful collapse of a long term relationship. It was the conclusion of one of these experiments of life I'm told make up your twenties, and no new beginnings were yet in sight. It was also a time of instability in relation to a recurrent health condition, and I was beholden to the schedules of specialists to tell me when they would be able to tell me when I could begin to plan for the future. All of this amounted to a strange dilation of time, a string of months where all of life seemed to be held in suspense. And so I went to the Land of Enchantment.

The history, and present, of New Mexico is riddled with people looking for exactly the same thing: a landscape whose vastness could hold the space of time in their own lives. Artists who flee East Coast cities to look at the sky and hear themselves think. Georgia O'Keeffe, perhaps the quintessential

heroine of the Southwest artists, once exclaimed in a letter to Arthur Stieglitz, "there is so much more space between the ground and sky out here it is tremendous" (O'Keeffe, 1917). Her paintings, abstractions of both small and large moments, gently demanded that people see these hidden openings into the world. Agnes Martin, prompted by tragedy and illness to leave New York in the 60s, settled in New Mexico, and the cells of her signature austere gridded paintings expanded, as if each little square suddenly could breathe in more air and light. She began to design her paintings as encounters held in time, as a formal invitation to the sacred. In her writings she reflects that "perceiving is the same as receiving and it is the same as responding" (Martin, 89). These painters were drawn into this landscape as the necessary place to live their stoic commitment to beauty, often elaborated in response to painful private lives. Here, physical, psychic, and pictorial space come to harmonize with one another.

Sometimes we have to go somewhere that exists at

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the edges of the world as it makes sense to us. The geographer Yi-Fu Tuan writes about mythic space and its relation to the everyday. Mythic space is “a fuzzy area of defective knowledge surrounding the empirically known; it frames pragmatic space” (Tuan, 86).

In visual perception, it is the hazy field that circumscribes the extremely limited portion of the visual field that is actually in focus at any given time. But, according to Tuan, this space, to which we do not consciously attend, is necessary to our sense of orientation. It is the “fuzzy ambience of the known which gives man confidence in the known” (Tuan, 87). This is as true for epistemic or cosmological space as for visual or physical space; certain truths or facts about the world are taken for granted, but there is always a place where they meet the undetermined. This is because, quite simply, “facts require contexts in order to have meaning, and contexts invariably grow fuzzy and mythical around the edges” (Tuan, 88).

This recognition of the fundamental out-of-focusness of the world, the impossibility of complete and accurate knowledge, runs directly at odds with the disenchanted world as originally laid out by Weber in his lecture *Science as a Vocation*. Repurposing the term from Schiller, Weber theorizes disenchantment as a byproduct of both the decline of magic and the broadening reach of safeguard

the ability to not know, or to know differently.

Arroyo Seco, a small community just a few miles north of Taos, is a place where you’re allowed to speak in ways you really aren’t in most other places. My first full day harvesting garlic, I worked alongside a man named Scott, who lived in town with his pregnant wife. They were houseless at the time, and the woman who ran the farm would give him work in exchange for all the produce he could carry – money isn’t always abundant in this town, and a quasi-gift economy arises as a matter of fact. There is also a distinct generational element to this culture of reciprocity; the older residents share knowledge and resources with the younger New Mexico seekers, in whom they recognize versions of their younger selves. As Scott and I passed the hours pulling garlic from the ground, we talked about ourselves, our lives and, the omnipresent question for people who end up in a remote high desert town in the Southwest: what are you doing here? I said something about being in between jobs, probably in an agreeably poetic tone to obscure how little I knew what I was doing being anywhere. His response when I posed the question to him: “I’m an alchemist.”

Scott had trained for nearly a decade as an apprentice to a master alchemist, a man whose skill and power had apparently reached mythic stature among those in alchemical circles. From this man,

Scott had learned to cure tragic ailments of the mind and body. The master alchemist also knew how to make both the Homunculus and the Philosopher's Stone, two fantastical holy grails of historical alchemy. Scott had been studying with him in Colorado, and when he moved to New Mexico, Scott followed.

What is involved in believing any of this is true? What's involved in believing it isn't? To bestow Scott's claims with any degree of credibility would be to stray dangerously into the realm of quack beliefs, where mysticism and poetry and desperation mingle in unholy admixture, and people tend to take advantage of one another. If one were so inclined to surmount this first hurdle of belief, it would demand a complete upheaval in modernity's

conceptual understanding of the material universe – a psychologically uncomfortable experience at the very least. But to dismiss the possibility of magic out of hand would be to do violence to an impulse that can be variously life-saving, beautiful, and pragmatic: the impulse to see the world as inherently enchanted. Practically, to dismiss Scott as a quack, and thereby relegate an individual to the cult of the superstitious, would be to unwisely ignore the demonstrably widespread inclination for forms of living and being that lie beyond the loosely-piled up heap of norms called rational or modern or disenchanted life.

In writing off Scott's testimony to the reality of alchemy – the actual ability to transmute base metals into gold – one also writes off an entire



Canõnes taken by Libby Hoffenberg

space, both geographic and metaphysical, in which speaking like this *makes sense*.

In this part of New Mexico, it would be stranger to doubt the existence of magic than to believe it.

Arroyo Seco is a place where the movements of the stars and planets are causal factors on the horizon of life events, where spontaneous meetings end in dance and prayer, where banal encounters reverberate within an invisible realm where things mean things.

Within this constellation of beliefs, practicing alchemy becomes just one more way to assert that the world really is enchanted. Scholars of alchemy often vindicate the practice as paving ideological and methodological roads to modern chemistry. While it is certainly true that legitimized systems of knowledge often emerge from later-refuted ones, this whiggish account of alchemy as proto-chemistry disregards what is specifically appealing to people like Scott about alchemy, which is precisely its non reducibility to chemistry. What attracts Scott is the magic that persists as a remainder after the project of understanding the material world becomes modern science. And although the tolerance for mysticism in communities like this is heightened, I would argue that the desire for re-enchanted knowledge persists across broader swathes of society – evidenced by, among other things, a massive increase in the

popularity of astrology in the 21st century and the growing market for “alternative” therapies of all kinds. The inclination toward esotericism, often written off as naive superstition, might be more generously and wisely considered as a response to deeply felt anxieties about the inadequacies of the resources available to us to make sense of the world, particularly in times of crisis.

During periodic bouts of recurrent illness, I’ve looked beyond the conventional western healthcare system, the culmination of Weber’s intellectualization and rationalization in the realm of medicine. There was a growing dissonance between what the doctors told me and what was actually happening. Over the years, the illness and the treatment became inseparable. And it didn’t feel like a failure of technique; it felt like a philosophical crisis. Each time I entertained the possibility of entering into one the many worlds of “alternatives” – often invited by a friend or family member or acquaintance whose confidence in their respective practice was truly religious – I was overwhelmed by the sense of danger in choosing to believe something wholly other than what most people believe. The sense of transgressing a boundary separating what I understood, although I understood it to be inadequate, from a hazy space where causes and effects couldn’t be verified by the same means.



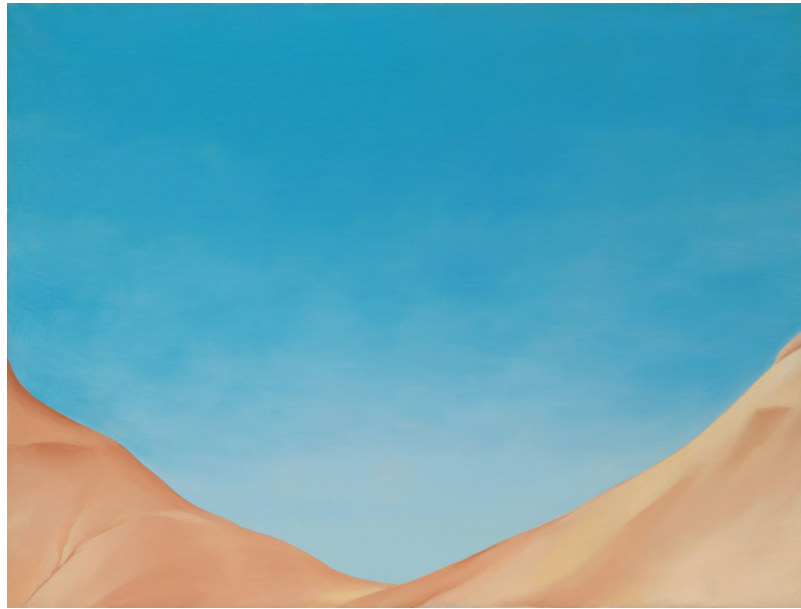
Everybody in this town, always, is talking about healing. One feels, viscerally, that not only is the Land of Enchantment, for those who flock here, populated by magic, but that this desire to live in mythic space is directly related to a very personal desire to heal, whatever that might mean. This is as true for people drawn to living here today as for those mystic desert painters. During the first part of her life, Agnes Martin was diagnosed at various moments with paranoid schizophrenia, catatonia, and major depression. As it becomes clear through both her paintings and the writing she produced after she quit painting and before she returned to it at the end of her life, what saves her in the end is the beauty of the world, and its mystery. She writes, “The response to beauty is emotion. Sometimes very subtle emotions of which we are almost not aware, and sometimes our most powerful emotions.” Through the nonrepresentational space of her paintings, she was not attempting to leave objective reality behind, but to find a way to hold what is real in a different way: the mythic space that evades description, yet makes both knowledge possible and life liveable. Her work and her life were an attempt to surface this hidden realm.

When I mentioned that I was navigating uncertain terrain in relation to a medical diagnosis, I was referred to an herbal medicine doctor who was, incidentally, “a witch.” The referrer spoke about her in what struck me as a highly reasonable way to

speak about a witch, telling me that she was liable to work incredible wonders, and that by the same token she could exercise very dark forces as well, and it was best to be cautious in interacting with her. It does make sense.

The nexus of healing, knowledge, meaning, and magic is a contentious one to say the least – bound up with deeply politicized claims to legitimacy, trust in institutions, and the meaning of public health when the public ascribes variously to the systems of knowledge that underlie it. To deem a practice or belief unscientific or anti-science is to draw on an Enlightenment project that inscribes truth and experience within a homogenizing epistemic practice – a project that can be both profoundly valuable and profoundly destructive in its reach. What does it mean if healing, at least for some, necessarily involves traversing those lines of demarcation that separate knowledge from the unknown? Enchantment, in this case, is an epistemically dangerous act – and thus one with incredible potential to transfigure the conceptual relationships that constitute our collective ways of dwelling in the world.

The *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D’Alembert, formally called *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Encyclopedia, or a Systematic Dictionary of the Sciences, Arts, and Crafts), was published in France



Georgia O'Keeffe, Red Hills, from the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum

during the second half of the 18th century. It is generally taken as representative of Enlightenment thought, in both content and form; it both mapped areas of knowledge and everyday life that emerged with the Enlightenment and attempted to systematize and universalize the circulation of knowledge itself. In combing through the entries, one experiences a historically profound attempt to parcel out knowledge from superstition, to draw the line between science and unreasoned belief that would largely come to constitute both modernity and critiques of modernity.

The *Encyclopédie* contains three separate entries with the title “Enchantment.” The first and most general defines enchantment as “the phrases and ceremonies used by magicians to evoke demons, make curses or deceive people’s credibility.”

“Barbarous” and “uncivilized” practitioners “took

the idea of combining certain plants and some words which had become obsolete and meaningless, the products of their fathers’ mysterious practices... and introduced this crazy idea that with certain herbs and certain words, one could make the moon and stars come down from the heavens to the earth” (Mallet, 1755). The second definition applies to “enchantments” at the opera: illusions that are “well designed and quite amusing,” but liable to unwisely stir the passions. “So little based in reason were these illusions that they contradicted common sense and finally, without being too philosophical, one could confidently deny that they were even possible” (Cahusac, 1755). Here, enchantment is a theatrical device that, with the advancement of the operatic arts, should inevitably be replaced with a more rational management of intended emotional effects. Even art must eventually succumb to reason.

The third definition is of enchantment as “a means of healing illnesses, sometimes by use of amulets, talismans, phylacteries, precious stones and magic words...sometimes by the superstitious devices of the naïve, and sometimes by other similarly frivolous means.” This entry was written by Chevalier Louis de Jaucourt, who was a scholar, doctor, and the most prolific contributor to the *Encyclopédie*. De Jaucourt took a firmly mechanistic approach to science, in contrast with the other major contributor under the topics of medicine and biology, Ménéret de Chambaud, who ascribed to vitalism – a debate which shows that, even within Enlightenment thought at its most neatly encapsulated, disenchantment and enchantment are intimately, perhaps constitutionally, bound together. De Jaucourt writes of enchantment as healing: “It is born from ignorance, the love of living and the fear of death. Recognizing that...natural remedies...are sometimes useless, men jump at anything that comes to mind, anything that their imagination suggests to them.” A firm believer in enlightened medicine, he wrote a six-volume work on anatomy. (Unfortunately, when he sent the sole manuscript to be published in Amsterdam to avoid French censorship, the ship carrying it sank and 20 years of work were lost). He continues, “As medicine became increasingly well understood, it rejected all the superstitious application of ridiculous remedies and worked its healing abilities by means of its knowledge” (Jaucourt, 1755).

The history of modern medicine is circumscribed by the much broader attempt to produce an empirical world that is systematically and uniformly knowable – a method that results in great utility but potentially ends in what Han calls a “hell of the same” (Chul-Han, 44) The art of healing, on the other hand, might call for journeys into mythic space, that unperceived field, “inaccurate and dyed in phantasms,” that always hovers at the peripheries of what we claim to know (Tuan, 88).

Enchantment is a strategy for lingering in this place, between what is familiar and what is undetermined. And at moments of individual or collective malady, inhabiting this kind of psychogeography might be good medicine.

In a lecture given at The Carnegie Art Museum in Pittsburgh, entitled “Beauty is the Mystery of Life,” Martin said, “It is commonly thought that everything that is can be put into words. But there is a wide range of emotional response that we make that cannot be put into words. We are so used to making these emotional responses that we are not consciously aware of them till they are represented in art work” (Morris and Bell, 158-9). Art as a way of seeing, of conditioning oneself toward the subtle. Martin’s paintings become containers for holding that which in daily life mostly stays at the margins, for bringing fuzzy areas of knowledge into view. This focus on bearing the non-discursive is reminiscent of Byung Chul-Han’s discussion of art in *The Disappearance of Ritual*. He writes that

contemporary art is preoccupied with communication over community: “Magic and enchantment – the true sources of art...[are] replaced by discourse...Art becomes transparent with regard to its meaning. It no longer seduces. The magic veil is cast off.” He contrasts this mode of creating with the latent promise of an art that strives for a shared symbolic experience, one in which “the forms...themselves talk.” He writes of “a language of forms” characterized by “complexity, equivocation, exaggeration, a high degree of ambiguity that even reaches the level of contradiction. These suggest meaningfulness without immediately being reducible to meaning” (Chul-Han, 25). An alchemical encounter that, precisely through its unintelligibility, transports one into a new space of possibilities for living.

I’m no longer in New Mexico . In the Fall I moved to a new city and started a new job, and life, once again, looks very different. But that time in the big space and sun stays in my peripheral vision. If last July were a painting, it would be saturated in venetian red and burnt sienna and endless roads and so many tears and massive storms and dust on my legs, and I don’t know what it meant. Fuzzy spaces shift into focus, and pragmatic space becomes opaque. The Land of Enchantment demands that you recognize: there is always a place where things make a different kind of sense.

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# Wind the Majestic Temple

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST 3RD PLACE  
DEREK MENG, 11, CALIFORNIA USA

Wind, a magnificent force of nature is beautiful,  
It escorts pollen produced by flowers to its neighbors,  
In return plants produce oxygen for winds to carry,  
That is how plants honor the wind.  
The oxygen carried by the wind,  
Is whisked into animals lungs, allowing them to live,  
In return animals exhale carbon that winds escort back to trees,  
That is how animals honor the wind.  
Wind helps carry birds of all kinds,  
The wind helps birds glide among the sky,  
In return birds flap their wings to create small winds that spread,  
That is how birds honor the wind.  
We ponder upon how to honor the wind,  
But all we have to do is give the wind something to carry,  
Like how trees give oxygen, animals give carbon, and birds give  
wind,  
We give Wind the Majestic Temple music to carry.

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*Photograph courtesy of Soul Fire Farm*

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# Enchantment with the Earth

INTERVIEW WITH CRYSTA BLOOM FROM  
SOUL FIRE FARM, INTERVIEWED BY  
VANESSA MENG, TRANSCRIBED BY GABRIEL  
ERTSGAARD

*Crysta Bloom is Communications Manager for Soul Fire Farm, an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm located in New York state. Soul Fire Farm is a 501c3 nonprofit educational organization committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system.*

**VM:** Can you tell us about the work of Soul Fire Farm and its different programs?

**CB:** We do so many things! Overall, Soul Fire Farm addresses racism in the food system. One of the biggest ways we do that is through education. We invite the next generation of Black and Brown farmers to come and learn farming in a way that is culturally relevant. We also have programs for the community to come and get their hands on the earth and connect with us. We have a solidarity share program. Most of the food we grow goes to that program to act in solidarity with people living under food apartheid in Albany and Troy, New York. We also have just really joyful,

beautiful events. For instance, we have SOULstice — and it’s just a big, beautiful party that we have in the summer to raise funds and celebrate our interdependence with the land and each other.

**VM:** What does “Soul Fire” means to you? And what led you to join this community?

**CB:** I think that the name “Soul Fire” resonates differently with each person. For me, “soul” relates to the spiritually led, joyful work that we do. There is such joy and love in this community, this soulful, spiritual connection. “Fire” is the rage and grief that we have for our people—this desire for liberation and freedom, for land and food. There is this duality in our work. It comes from this very fiery, passionate, even sometimes rageful place, but through the lens of this soulful, spiritual, divinely-connected way. They work in tandem. I can allow myself to feel that fire because I can rest into the very safe and loving space created by my community.

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Photo courtesy of Soul Fire Farm

As for what led me to Soul Fire Farm, I had been looking for truth and for my people for a while. The deeper I got into that search, the more I found myself in spaces with Soul Fire community. I'd meet Soul Fire people at rituals, ceremonies, and events. Anytime I was with this community, I felt such resonance and kinship. Then my personal work led me into wellness, especially the mental and physical health of Black and Brown people. I'm a somatic embodiment practitioner. I also teach yoga. I was working for another collective, and things just didn't work out. Then this opening happened at Soul Fire, and it felt really ordained, like something I had called into my life.

**VM:** How does your background in yoga and embodiment work connect to your mission at Soul Fire Farm?

**CB:** In embodiment work, whenever there is something that we need to tend to—something like anger or sadness—what we do first is search within the body for where it feels the most grounded, the most at peace and at rest. That creates this spaciousness within us to be able to be in relationship with that rage, that grief, that sadness. It expands our capacity to be able to hold that. I think that's also what we do in our work at Soul Fire Farm. Soul Fire creates this grounded space so beautifully. If you don't have pleasure, joy, and connection, you'll get burnt out.

The issues of racism and food injustice feel so huge. They makes us ask, "What can I do? How can this possibly be fixed?" What brings people to Soul Fire is this spirit of joyfulness, this sense of spiritually being led. That allows us to say, "Okay, I can rest into something soft while I'm attending to

something really big and fiery.” That’s what our ancestors did. Our ancestors were on the plantation singing. They were finding joy and connection within their situation.

**VM:** You mentioned culturally relevant practices. What does that include?

**CB:** At Soul Fire Farm, we use Afro-indigenous agroforestry, silvopasture, wildcrafting, polyculture, and spiritual farming practices to regenerate 80 acres of mountainside land, producing fruits, plant medicine, pasture-raised livestock, honey, mushrooms, vegetables, and preserves for community provisioning, with the majority of the harvest provided to people living under food apartheid or impacted by state violence. Our ancestral farming practices increase topsoil depth, sequester soil carbon, and increase biodiversity. The buildings on the farm are hand-constructed, using local wood, adobe, straw bales, solar heat, and reclaimed materials.

When you come to Soul Fire, the first thing we ask you to do is kneel down and place your hands on the land, on your heart, then back on the land. The reason we do this is because we are in relationship with the land. The land is not something for us to dominate over. The land is our family, and we are the youngest sibling of this land.

Before we do anything, like building our new program center, we first ask the land. And our land at Soul Fire has veto power. There’s a body of water on our property that used to be a shallow bog. We wanted to be able to swim and do ceremonies in it. We asked the water if we could clean and renovate it, but the water said no. So we didn’t for many years until the water said yes. Anytime we need to build, anytime it’s time to harvest, we do some kind of ceremony and practice around gratitude for the land. That’s ancestral wisdom, but it’s a re-remembering for so many of us.

Anytime there is something that happens in our community around policy, or some kind of process that we want to respond to, knowing how to move forward comes from our connection to the divine. It comes from listening to the earth, the trees, the winds, the water, and all of the spirits that are on this land. That is how we know how to move forward. We’re working toward, not only the liberation of humans, but also the liberation of our land, our animals, and our environment. How can we do that without knowing what the land wants, feels, and says?

**VM:** The theme of this issue is “re-enchantment.” What does that word bring up for you?

**CB:** For me, it brings up reconnecting to ancestral memory and reconnecting to the land. We are all

swimming in the cultural grime of patriarchy and capitalism. No one is unaffected by that. The way Black and Brown bodies are affected is through a disconnection from self, and therefore also from our environment, our land, and our ancestral wisdom. We all need to cope, so if you're in an environment where you constantly need to be on guard, connecting to your own feelings can be very scary. We move through this world disconnected. We need awakenings and safe spaces to come back into enchantment, to come back into connection.

When I sit with the earth and receive an answer, every time I'm enchanted. We have access to that whenever we want. We have access to all of this wisdom that surrounds us. Our ancestors have been doing this for so many years. That's in our blood, it's in our skin, it's in our make up. All we have to do is tap into it.



Photo Courtesy of Soul Fire Farm

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# De-Deforestation

YOUTH ESSAY AND SHORT STORY CONTEST  
1ST PLACE  
HEATHER CHANG, 15, CALIFORNIA, USA

Sunlight touched every corner of the spacious glass building, allowing those inside to view the indoor garden a few hundred feet below. Beautiful greenery in the form of trees that nearly touched the clear dome ceiling, bushes of all types, and flowers that came in every color imaginable were enjoyed by most people from either in their offices or strolling through the garden on ground floor. Curtains were rarely ever drawn, but up on the 60th floor, a man dressed in a sleek gray suit pulled the curtains together, keeping the natural light out and filling the room with his office light instead.

He turned away from the window and clapped his hands together once. "Right, now all you have to do is sign right there and the new apartment buildings of our dreams are in reach!" He sat back down in his chair with an expectant smile.

The man sitting before him chuckled awkwardly. "And you're quite sure there is no other location this could be built on other than on the land that forest is currently occupying?"

"Mr. Baker, I can assure you I would not suggest this land if it weren't the only possible option we have," the gray-suited man said, leaning forward with an understanding expression. "But think about all the people this new project would house. And all the credit would go to you."

The other man sighed, but his eyes were unfocused, likely seeing his own successful future in his mind. In the span of a few seconds, the documents were signed, the deal was made, and the forest's fate was decided.

"Mr. Green!" A gasping young man caught up to the man in the gray suit in a hallway. "Did you actually complete the deal with Baker?"

"Why, I sure did," Matt Green said, walking fast and checking his phone as if he couldn't be bothered with this conversation. "I said I would and I did."

The young man grabbed his arm in exasperation,

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wheeling him around mid-step. "Did you not hear a word from our conversation this morning? You know the public won't stand for this. Your name and the company's name will be dragged through the dirt!" He jabbed a finger into Matt's chest.

"No, it won't, because that's not my problem. Get the PR team do their job and this will blow over," he checked his watch and rolled his eyes. "And now you've made me late to my next meeting." Without another word, he strode off, leaving the young man standing in the middle of the hallway.

"Anderson, did you see this?" A woman in the cubicle he was leaning on tapped the young man's shoulder, showing him something on her phone.

"He's actually done it, signed the papers and everything."

"I know, that's what I was talking to him about," he rubbed his temples with one hand. "I can just imagine the article titles - 'Treasured National Forest Destroyed by Matt Green' - I mean, does he even know how many people go there every year? People are going to be angry."

Shaking his head, he strode off in a hurry.

Buildings of glass loomed over Matt's car as he drove home. Vines wrapped around the sides and

dangled from the roofs of every building in the city. Gardens of all sorts were on the ground as well as in and around buildings. The car drove smoothly under footbridges that looked as if they were made with flowers and vines.

The sun was beginning to set. Inside the car, Matt turned on the radio to the news channel, which he immediately regretted when he heard it.

"-world's youngest CEO, Matt Green, has just approved the destruction of one of the most beautiful national parks in the world. Whether this was the right decision or a step too far is unclear-"

Matt shut off the radio, cursing under his breath. "There isn't even a need for this forest - it's one of many," he gritted his teeth. "If people just looked around themselves, they'd notice we're practically surrounded by one at this point."

He gripped the steering wheel tighter, muttering to himself. "You know what, I'll go to the forest tomorrow, prove that it's no big deal, that it's already set in stone and no one can change my mind."

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A solid wall of brown bark blocked Matt's way. That was only part of the largest tree he had ever seen both in terms of height and width. His annoyance tripled. He was already spending the day examining the forest and now he couldn't even get in without going through the national park's public

entrance - and he knew there was a less than likely chance of a warm welcome after yesterday's news. Sighing, he turned the car around and decided he had no choice but to enter through the public entrance.

Once inside, the reason this forest was so treasured could not come to – for the life of him. It was seemingly identical trees this way and that, the occasional crunch of pine beneath his feet and the smell of simple earth. There was not much different from this forest than any other one Matt had ever been to.

Yet there was a certain twinkle in the yellow and orange leaves above him, as if millions of tiny stars lived between the branches. The way the sunlight streamed through the leaves and hit the ground was almost magical.

Suddenly, one of the twinkling stars moved. Not just flickered or twitched, but moved. Matt squinted at it, stepping closer to the tree it was on. The star floated down, down, down, and it started growing bigger by the second. Alarmed, he scrambled back as the star kept growing until it was the size of a mouse, landing softly on the ground without a sound.

Now less afraid and more intrigued, the young man leaned forward to examine what it was that had

fallen so gracefully. And there - standing right in front of him - was what looked to be a tiny human with glittering wings. Matt blinked, unable to believe what he was seeing. He stuck a finger out to touch the creature, to make sure it wasn't a figment of his imagination, and the creature swatted his finger away with her tiny hand.

Matt's jaw dropped in surprise. "Wha-What are you?" He asked, unsure whether the creature would respond.

"I'm a fairy, of course," she snorted, rolling her eyes. She fluttered up a few inches to get to eye level with Matt, hovering mid-air in front of his face. It seemed so ridiculous to him that he scoffed, getting to his feet and turning away. He tried to convince himself that it was just the slight guilt of signing the document that had created hallucinations. It was all in his mind.

But as soon as he turned, there the fairy was again. Right in front of him, with a look on her face that only increased Matt's guilt.

"You're not going anywhere," she said. "No, we need to talk."

"I am not talking to a hallucination," he snapped, realizing that as soon as the words left his mouth that he had just spoken to what he deemed as a

hallucination.

At that moment, he felt a slight pain on his left arm and looked down to see the fairy pinching him. She held up her tiny arms in a shrug. "See? Very real."

"How did you- You know what, it's crazy what the mind can come up with," he told the fairy, or rather, his hallucination.

"I'm real, and you know it," she said. "And I also know who you are. I think you should follow me."

Without another word, she began flying away, and even though Matt was still reluctant to believe he had just talked to a fairy, he let his curiosity get the best of him and followed. They walked through the forest, around trees and over logs, getting deeper and deeper. In the silence, he began noticing sounds he hadn't heard before - the buzzing of insects, the chirps of crickets, the singing of birds, and the soft, gentle trickle of water in small creeks.

Matt wasn't sure how much time had passed. He put one foot in front of the other, keeping the tiny glow of the fairy in view. He wondered if he would lose his way, but a small part of him felt that as long as he followed the fairy, he was on the right track. After a while the pine needles on the ground turned to lush green grass and the identical trees with orangish-yellow leaves transformed to a variety of different ones, a true forest. There were tall

redwood trees, so high in the sky that he could barely see the top. Cherry blossom trees sprinkled white and pink petals on him whenever he walked under them. Long, graceful branches belonging to willow trees waved in the wind. It seemed strange to him that the forest contained countless types of trees, yet he found himself enjoying the company of the diverse forest.

Then he remembered he had just signed what was essentially a death sentence for each and every one of the inhabitants of this forest, and slowly he grew more and more doubtful that it was the right decision.

Lost in thought, he nearly fell flat on his face upon entering a clearing. He looked around for his fairy, but he was seeing double. Or triple. Quadruple. Or that multiplied by a hundred. It hit him - he must be in the fairies' home.

"Mr. Green?" A little voice called out. Matt whirled around, his eyes flickering from one fairy to the next, trying to figure out from which the voice had come from. His eyes landed on the fairy he had followed to this place. "The queen wants to see you."

"Queen? What-" He sputtered.

"There's no time to waste. Come along." The crowd of fairies gathered at the entrance of the

clearing parted in the center. Matt had no choice but to follow his original fairy through the crowd. Piercing glares from every pair of fairy eyes followed him as he made his way through, and he caught mutters and whispers. It didn't take long for him to realize what they were talking about.

The fairy queen was perhaps a centimeter taller than Matt's fairy guide. Her elegance was undeniable despite her small size. Hair the color of the night sky was tucked in a loose bun on top of her head, a few strands framing her amber eyes. A golden dress that matched the color of her eyes looked as if it were made from several sunflower petals, shimmering with an enchanting quality whenever the light danced upon it. Her wings looked the same as all the other fairies, except they were a bit bigger.

"Hello, Mr. Green." She smiled warmly. "Do you know why we have called you here today?"

"You didn't call me, I drove here-" Matt started. The queen held up a finger to silence him. She continued to smile. "The moment your pen touched that paper yesterday, you doomed our forest, our home, our people."

Matt stared at her. He knew deep down that she was right. But his pride was too great for him to admit that. "How do you even know? Besides, I had

to. You don't understand-"

"You and I both know you didn't have to." The queen's voice suddenly seemed much louder. "You wanted to. For your own greed."

He stared at her. She stared back and it became a matter of who would surrender to the other. Though the smile had left her lips, her eyes were still warm, beckoning him to make the right decision. "You know what you have to do," she whispered. The longer he stared, the more clear it became that he could not hide from his decision forever, and with that realization he gave a slight nod.

The smile returned to the queen's face and she nodded back at him. Then he heard what sounded like a thousand tinkling bells behind him and turned to see that the fairy crowd was clapping their hands together in joy. He glanced back behind him and saw that the fairy queen was gone, but felt something on his shoulder. It was the fairy who had guided him to the clearing.

"I think it's time for you to go. After all, you have something very important to do, don't you?"

The two passed back through the crowd of fairies to the edge of the clearing, and this time, the looks on the fairies faces were no longer angry, and although they didn't look as if they liked him, they respected him.



He peered at the fairy on his shoulder. "Sorry," he muttered, the word unfamiliar to him. "I shouldn't have signed that document."

"You're doing the right thing in the end," she fluttered off his shoulder to look him in the eye.

Matt realized that he did not know the fairy's name and asked.

"Flora. My name is Flora."

"Thank you, Flora," he said. And it was one of the most genuine things he had ever said. Flora smiled at him. She began to fly away.

"Wait! Will I ever see you again?"

Flora paused mid-air. "I have a feeling you'll see me again very soon."

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Two hands tore the document in half, then in quarters. The pieces were swept into a garbage can in a room full of news reporters and their bulky camera crews.

"Mr. Green, what influenced this sudden change of heart?" A microphone appeared in front of his mouth.

"Well, let's just say this was a momentary lapse of judgment on my part. I had some time to reflect,

and I realized this forest is irreplaceable and to destroy it would be unforgivable." He glanced outside the window, the curtains pulled apart allowing natural sunlight to stream in and fill the whole room.

He looked back at the reporters and flashed a big smile for the cameras. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticed a small movement coming from outside the window. Flora appeared, her expression a mixture of pride and happiness. When Matt met eyes with her, she winked at him before vanishing as fast as she had appeared. And Mr. Green knew he had made the right decision.

# What are we really doing with generative AI?

## Because we're not creating masterpieces (not yet at least)

SYLVAN RACKER



This is not a critique or defence of the ability of generative AI (which we'll shorten to 'genAI' from now on) but to highlight what seems to be part of the genAI community's approach to content creation. Whilst there have been some very iconic moments, so far there have been no clear stand-out generated 'masterpieces'. Perhaps this is because masterpieces take longer to become established than genAI is willing to wait, but I feel there is also something else going on, something more enchanting than what I see in the mainstream AI debate.

When using genAI, I feel a contradiction. Whilst part of me wants the output to be 'perfect' (in whatever way it's being measured at that moment) I also feel I'm just taking part in an ongoing process. At some point in this process, I may feel compelled enough to share the latest output on social media or point my phone at

*perhaps one of the only profound moments of this film...*

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a friend, hoping it will evoke a small laugh or a moment of intrigue. This iterative process of discovery feels like what I am really doing with genAI.

In some ways this iteration is consistent with my understanding of approaches taken in the making of many varied forms of art. What I (reductively) mean by this is that most art comes from humans using a technology to make visible the feelings and thoughts evoked when living in their context of systems and histories (which have also ultimately led to the creation of the technology being used). The underlying feelings and the expressions seem to not be known at the beginning of the process but, like genAI, come through a process of iteration that informs the artist's ideas and their manifestation.

In using a piece of technology to translate internal thoughts and feelings we constrain and define what can be expressed in a way that is idiosyncratic to the technology (usually based on its material qualities) and makes particular experiences more or less likely. Perhaps this is obvious but just imagining the difference in experiences of a trombone opposed with a violin or of a book in contrast with ballet.

So, is there a difference with genAI? There are certainly similarities I can see but the main difference I'll go into here is that in the past 'nearly' all media required the creator to decide the direction of a creation. Questions of 'why', 'how' of

what else' were left to the creator to define in moments of 'inspiration'. These moments relied on countless and largely intangible factors such as walks in the woods, dreams/hallucinations, and conversations with other people which acted as stimuli for the direction of creation. It seems unlikely these processes will go away but there is a new and different method now possible.

With genAI some of these questions and types of stimuli required to answer them are concentrated into neat containers such as chatGPT or StableDiffusion. In the same way as developing a piece of art in the past may have required many iterations or repeated visits to the artist's favourite hilltop (or bar) before the right moment of inspiration hit, so too with genAI. The repeated iterative approach I mentioned earlier allows for the identification of aesthetic features that the user may want to amplify or reduce whilst also uncovering a little more about the user's underlying and evolving tastes and judgements.

In addition to learning our own tastes from this process, we learn about the genAI model being used. There still remains a question of whether this is just an advanced version of the previously mentioned 'getting to know the technology's material properties' as one might when learning painting techniques. Whether this is the case or there is something else going on, anyone who has used genAI can tell you that different models

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display idiosyncratic characteristics, some more obvious than others. Whether I mean to or not, I find myself attempting to find reasons for why these characteristics have developed. Is it the data used in training? Is it a feature explicitly added by the developers? Is it a reaction to my personality? Is it an emergent behaviour from the underlying code? Sometimes these questions can be answered but often it is not clear and perhaps never will be.

Often characteristics are only called into question in the critiques of models, such as them "not being able to do hands" when generating the wrong number of fingers. Or comments on the particularly distinctive style of Midjourney images which go for this epic photorealistic look. These are all part of questions I think are excellent to ask such as: How could the aesthetics of these images be different? What feelings emerge towards outputs from particular models? What moments were disappointing or frustrating during the process? When was a different programme required to get the results required?

It is in experimenting and asking these questions I believe we can appreciate how deeply 'in progress' the AI project is. Through this investigation and participation hopefully, a much wider group of people can contribute and develop future models which align with and inform their (hopefully beneficial) desires. In asking 'why' we care so much

about abstract hand generations perhaps we get at an underlying set of beliefs.

What we are doing with AI can feel like automatically generating photos and so critiques on the photorealism of an image makes sense. However, I can't help but make the comparison with 19th century scepticism of photography, from figures such as Baudelaire, that photos lack the expressivity of paintings because of their mechanical nature. Noticing the brushstrokes and composition of a painting still evoke wonder today but so too does the preparation, timing and skill of photography. Attempting to judge a new media production by old paradigms seems like an approach that is unlikely to allow us to see the opportunity and beauty in an ever changing world.

A process of self and material discovery previously reserved for those with the necessary confidence and artistic competency is now open to anyone willing to find and experiment with genAI applications. There will continue to be countless moments of enchantment from art, plants, animals, other people or daydreaming. However, in what may be a unique moment in human history, we have the opportunity to relate to and learn from something familiar yet unpredictable and with the capability of responding in our own language. It may not be able to give us 'truth' but, to me, it is able to enchant our subjective experiences.

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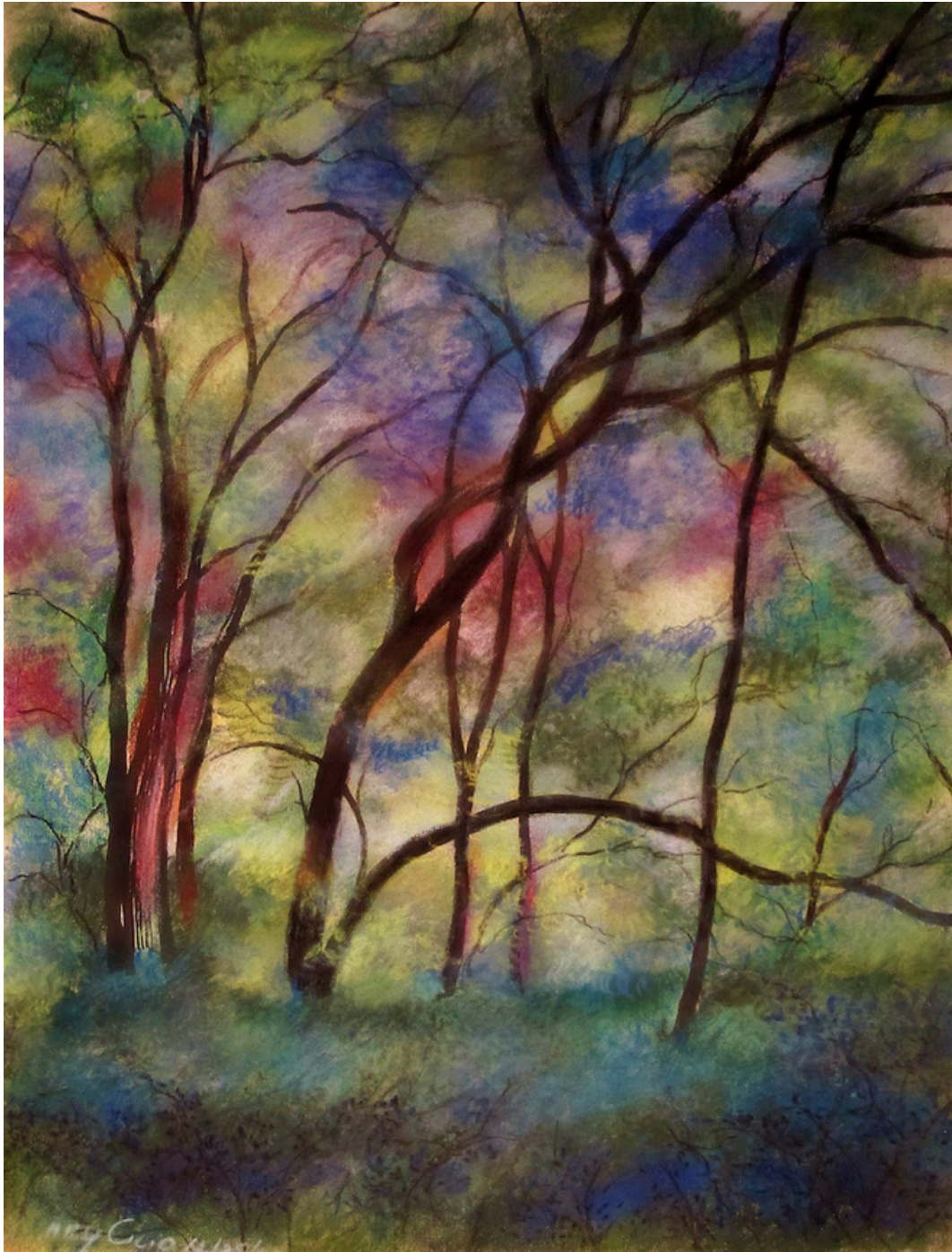
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# Notes from Yesterday

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST 4TH PLACE  
RALEIGH RHODES, 14, TEXAS, USA

Rain wet air hangs warm and dank  
Perfumed flowers awakening from  
a silver-cold dream  
This is the season of reincarnation  
In rotten stumps mushrooms sprout one after the other  
Toadstools, puffballs, and the like  
Deep in the mountain forests, springs  
well underground,  
rushing from hidden hollows  
quavering from the first rains last night.  
I saw a field hand return to his work yesterday.  
In the dusk he sowed his seeds  
Watermelons, Cantaloupes, Sweet Potatoes.  
Come summer under moon ray and star light  
he will harvest them  
This is that season  
Even birds begin their journey home  
Twigs and branches breaking under the wait of  
a hundred starlings.  
This is that season when  
Nature becomes one  
Earth, awakens, fawning over the  
world she had left behind.

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*Inwood Park After the Rain*, Pastel, Leonard Cicio  
Work for sale

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# The Door in the Rock: Reflections on Re- Enchantment

JANET GERSON

Enchantment can be the same as the Spanish “encanto” which resonates with love. Or magic. Or the way we feel beyond ourselves by pulling out into the world, senses open, lunging forward toward connection. Enchantment can be the love that motivates us to move through life. It may feel like a moment when our longing for sensuality and engagement goes free, expanding like air and water, like an octopus or a jelly fish, like radiant protoplasm! Enchantment is also desire that drives us toward a vision, a path to pursue. Our pursuits are coupled with and guided by our underlying assumptions.

Can re-enchantment help us to reorient our human centric-societies toward a revitalized relationship to our living Earth? How might we shift our grounding assumptions? I explore these queries from a personal perspective and the shifts driven by will, desire, enchantment, and disillusion. Given the

ecological catastrophe we must face, my aim is to shed some light on how movement and transformation can happen when we face our realities. The Dazzle of Dance and Manhattan I wanted to be a dancer-choreographer more than anything. That dream and desire guided me to move to Manhattan, the arts capital of the US. It guided my practices of austerity to build a life with little monetary reward, but with the beauty of vibrant movements and intense collaboration with other dancers and artists.

My enchantment with dance aligned with the lure of Manhattan, its pulsing liveliness intensified within soaring towers and seemingly solid ground. Dazzling Manhattan caught my imagination just as dancing does in its transcendence of human limits. Manhattan embodies that transcendence in multiple awesome human-made forms, human supporting and accommodating, and yet in a

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perpetual state of glittering – like tutus catching the stage lights.

Manhattan is a magnet for those of us longing for intellectual, artistic, cross-cultural encounters. The land of the flourishing, rising, coming into visibility. Finding recognition. Finding like-living others.

Ironically, the lights and the celebrities displace our ability to see the sky's naturally glittering stars.

I sought to escape the oppression of homogenization that was the dominant aim of the post-war suburb I grew up in. Instead, I wanted to live in a bubbling culture of creativity, resourcefulness, abundance. Manhattan is a concentration of these. Whereas in my flat Midwestern town, I was odd; in Manhattan, odd different displaced and emergent are woven throughout this throbbing texture, readily available on most street corners.

But, I found surprising contradictions that challenged my surface assumptions and deeper unconscious beliefs.

### **Cracks and Rivulets**

Among the challenges encountered were my assumptions about geology.

In 1976, I took the Uptown A train to the 190th Street and Bennett Avenue. To reach the street, it

was necessary to walk through a long, dank pedestrian tunnel. When I stepped out into the light, I looked back. The green doors opened out of a huge rock. Really? This rock extended up several stories above which grew a cluster of trees and bush. In that moment, I realized that I assumed that all the rocks in Manhattan were imported by landscapers. Central Park to me was one lovely manicured human arrangement that included man-made lakes, rock surfaces, trees, grasses, brambles.

The geography of my Illinois imagination was flat, rockless, with natural grasses in an immense prairie land. I had projected that onto Manhattan. I thought all those lovely rock-bald Central Park surfaces were fake.

Suddenly, I had a mental epiphany – above this Bennett Avenue Rock was the woodsy Ft. Tryon Park that bordered the eastern shore of the Hudson River. The landscape of my imagination opened onto an expansive vision of original peoples in their canoes, hunting, and tracking through these woods. There are Indian Caves in another leg of this rocky elevated woodlands. There is the spot where Manhattan was supposedly sold by the Lenape peoples to the Dutch. These odd pieces of history and myth began to find pathways into my newly emerging mental conceptualization of the Manhattan landscape.

Our landscapes of origin permeate our current



assumptions and circumnavigations. Now a long-time New Yorker, I move easily through subways, on highways, streets, and sidewalks. This is my human-centric “reality”. But a California friend further challenged Manhattan’s geography, questioning our sense of groundedness. “Where is the actual ground level?” he asked. The elevator buttons direct passengers to the “Ground Floor”; however, that is another human-oriented label! What lies beneath? When what we think we know collapses, we feel disoriented.

A third assumption was challenged by a meeting with activists and a local politician. My activist daughter Chloe Tribich and her friend, Joya Colon-Berezin, organized a meeting with NYC Assemblyman Herman “Denny” Farrell to demand 181st Street Station Subway repairs. They challenged the leaks and mold and the ancient often-broken 3-storey escalator down to the train platform. The Honorable Mr. Farrell laughed and threw over another myth. He stated that the subway ran under the many rivulets that permeated Manhattan. That was why this station was three storeys below street level. Literally tons of water are pumped out of the NYC subway system every day. Farrell explained that in other places in our neighborhood such as 125th Street and also (east) Dyckman Street, the trains are elevated because the land there is too waterfilled for the trains to run underground. This was another moment of epiphany for me. These

“facts” I had learned from common knowledge and also from “reliable” scientific sources, were overturned.

In 1974, when I moved to New York from Chicago, I visited the American Museum of Natural History, a museum as well as a research center filled with scientists’ offices. In the Mineral Exhibit, the placards explained that Manhattan was solid rock. In fact, it was a solid geological continuation of the New Jersey Palisades, the visible cliffs lining the western banks of the Hudson River. This resonated with what I had been told that the phenomenon of Manhattan skyscraper buildings was made possible by the solid rockness of Manhattan Island. I took that as fact. However, now we were told by the practical Assemblyman of the hidden, buried reality that riding the subway included going below subaqueous tunnels and through river-permeated rocks. “That is more than mold”, said Farrell. “Those are mineral deposits -- stalactites.”

As my mental landscape was shocked into a new view, I was able to incorporate yet a fourth bit of information that I already “knew” but had no place for on my mental map of knowing. My 1920s building on (west) Dyckman Street had cracked and had to be evacuated and rebuilt. In 1939, to overcome peoples’ fears, potential renters were offered money to move in! The crack was due to it being built over a rivulet!



*The Door in the Rock Photo by Yvonne Montanino*

A new mental map was shattering my understanding of Manhattan. The mental framing based on assumptions, dated or hidden facts, and misleading assertions was cracking open, a crack that let new light in, as Leonard Cohen famously said.

This cracking, this challenge of understanding, opened me up to a whole new lens for seeing this place that has been my home now for decades. My lens for viewing what was all around me shifted, revealing the natural world interwoven within this dazzling urban scape of man-made lights.

### **Disillusionment and Re-orientation**

When we lose what we love, what we live for, we can become disoriented, disillusioned, perhaps even disenchanted.

In 1995, it struck me that there was much of life that I was missing. The precipitating context was an assault on arts organizations from all levels. Federal, State, and City governments were pulling out the complex streams of funding for the arts that enabled the rich community of artists in New York City to survive. I realized that I had hit a glass ceiling. It became clear that I would never gain the acclaim, funding, and vast network of support needed to improve the conditions for my mid-level dance company. Even the funding for Arts Interaction, the Arts Council of Upper Manhattan was being pulled from the community-service and free parks dance performances that my dance company organized and co-sponsored.

The frame within which I had been operating was organized around the aim to dance, choreograph, teach, and produce performances. It was hitting a wall of dis-enchantment. I had been under the illusion that if I worked hard, sacrificed, devoted myself totally, that I could achieve my dreams. My disillusionment was redescribed by sociology professor Harrison White as not just hitting the glass ceiling, but more like being suffocated by a giant descending plastic bag. Although I loved

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dance, did it love me back? I felt depleted over and over. Getting older, I realized that I needed more. I was brought down to my survival level. I couldn't allow my life to be snuffed out.

I had to crack open my restricted, narrow path, to re-orient myself toward something less depleting, more sustainable, and more, well, grounded.

Though crushed, I was also enraged. The multi-level governmental withdrawal of arts support politicized me. Structural problems became visible, demanding a more externalized emphasis. I had been channeling all my capacities and resources with the force of will through one river. Could I break that up? Diversify? Or...

My transformative journey began when, through friends, I received funding as a community arts organizer to participate in the Fourth Women's Global Forum in Beijing sponsored by UN. There were 30,000 women there from all walks of life, all countries, all working on peace. Peace – I saw that it was not just the stuff of my private dreams. I was drawn into this network of courageous, brilliant women, this stunning global social movement.

I chose graduate school as a place to re-fresh and re-orient myself. There I met Dr. Betty Reardon who became my mentor. Mercifully, my many capacities were embraced. In fighting for what I loved, I had

gained more than average amount of skills with conflict processes intertwined with a persistent practice of seeking creative, constructive outcomes. As a peace educator and political theorist, I found multiple rivulets opening for me. Following Betty, I was able to travel and work worldwide with peace educators, peace scholars and activists, and international legal experts. I loved learning with and from others. This re-orientation and these people became a new bright realm of fulfillment for me.

However, in 2019, all my work in the world came to a standstill. The COVID crisis required New Yorkers (and others across the globe) to stay at home. Schools were closed. Even outside, wearing masks was advised. Hugging friends was out. Going into stores, or anywhere, was discouraged. This quarantine was so antithetical to what many of us love about our city – the constant interactions, the intentional and the startling encounters in our very peopled urban world.

For New Yorkers like myself, the natural world around us is so often overlooked by our thinking and focus on goals. We sometimes joke that weather is something that happens elsewhere. However, quarantine reversed this oversight – serendipitously, these restrictions of contact and movement were not imposed outdoors.

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## The Door in the Rock

Fortunately, my very neighborhood of Upper Manhattan is surrounded by the much downplayed natural world. With my beloved family -- grandchildren, their parents, and my husband, we rediscovered the eye-opening worlds within surrounding parks. We sought out stimulation and activities -- new ways of knowing and learning -- by walking, hanging out, and searching out the natural world which is still protected in the woods, rivers, and marshland within blocks in each direction.

Being so confined, I dreamed about being at a wide-open beach. Miraculously, we discovered a formerly closed off, tiny “beach” at the very west end of Dyckman Street, just down the block! Though cramped, it allowed our world to open again. My son-in-law discovered a goose nest with eggs under elevated railroad tracks on the way to the beach. The kids saw the nest, the eggs, and then the hatchlings. From spring to summer to fall, we “met” the goose parents and goslings at “our” shared



Goslings and Grandchildren at the Beach, author

beach.

We observed the parallel growth of our kids and the goslings. They waddled and fell, learned to walk and to enter the water from the sandy edge, to swim, and eventually to bath themselves. We observed them protecting one weak-legged sibling, who eventually healed and joined the others in strength. They learned to nibble from the small patch of grass on land and from the seaweed-covered beach rocks. And we fed them too. They learned to come up to us for the snacks we brought for them. We saw the competition between the geese, ducks, pigeons and sparrows (in order of size). Eventually, they let our granddaughter pet them. Then the fall chill came. Our beach days ended, but our learning and finding interactive nourishment from our natural world had brought love, light, and discovery back into our lives.

Beside the geese, we found other birds’ nests, including one with party ribbons woven into it. We found various owl roosts. We learned about the soaring hawks. Lounging on a sloped lawn of Ft. Tryon Park, we saw a squirrel scurry beneath pine branches where he shivered in stillness. Sure enough, there was a hawk searching above. I drew courage from the squirrel’s ability to protect herself. At the very tip of Manhattan are marshlands where the tides easing in and out could be observed. There, the Hudson and Harlem Rivers swirl into

each other. The saltwater and fresh water mixing and tides rolling cause devilishly dangerous currents, named Spuyten Duyval. Fishermen on banks explained to us that the fish flopped on the rocks were suffering from lack of oxygen in the Hudson, a sign of the ill health of this mini-ecosystem. We felt helpless. And, we felt awe that a Harbor Seal chose a rock in this marshland to bask at twilight. “Sealy” became a celebrity as neighbors would gather to sit nearby to observe him, and to chat amongst ourselves, a replacement for our closed cafes. Finding this door in the rock that is Manhattan gave us a new viewpoint, inviting new possibilities for re-enchantment with our home.

### **Solace and Wisdom**

When I had cancer in 2001-2, I turned to walking in the parks for comfort. I observed an old fruit tree with many squirrels briskly running up, down, and 'round its branches. The tree had survived despite having many branches cut away. It held a community of lively squirrels, providing a holding space for their antics. I wanted to be like that tree – a survivor that could hold a community of active, happy others.

In the old growth areas of Inwood Hill Park, friends took me walking, thereby showing me my own hidden strengths beyond the chemo-induced weakness. We found ancient tulip trees 3-400 hundred years old. These trees have seen and

survived so much. They were there to witness the vision that flashed through my mind as I walked through the subway door in an ancient rock. These old growth trees had seen the Lenape in their canoes on the Hudson, their fishing, hunting, camping, and sheltering. These trees were hubs for the natural life in this sky air earth and water ecology.

I curled up under the ancient tulip tree, awestruck by its height, beauty, longevity. I hugged the tree's girth four times wider than my arms could reach. During chemo, I imagined this tree's branches forming a hammock to hold and comfort me. Lying sick in bed after, I dreamed of the tree and the creatures who lived with it. Like Snow White, I imagined these creature came out of the woods, curious about me. I drew solace from their aliveness and attentiveness. I lay amongst them somewhere between my life and my death seeking a path to healing.

### **Re-Enchantment Within Rhythms of Life**

I don't have answers. Nor have I succeeded in regaining that radiant, beyond-the-laws-of-gravity sense of enchantment. I have lived, more grounded now, in the realities of my responsibilities. I understand more of the limits of my power and my will.

In response to the current ecological crisis, I try to align with the breathing earth, to be in the hum of the universe. I meditate on how we humans can realign our societies to reconcile with our Earth that sustains us. As Betty Reardon states, regenerative ecology must be core to a reconceived peace pedagogy. This would embrace learning toward reforming relations among humans, all living systems, within the whole of the natural world. Ecological peace would grow from both de-centering humans, and re-centering within the living world, into the rhythms of life, sharing the air, water, and sustaining resources. Reconceptualization entails recognition of the need to cultivate and regenerate reverence for our interdependence, and for understanding that peace and sustainability come from knowing that we need each other.

I am in awe of life. I relish the fragments of beauty and liveliness, of light and flow. Perhaps this can grow to be a source of re-enchantment, perhaps... starting now, opening this door right here, in the rock where I stand.



Ezra Ama at the beach



Stella and Chloe feeding the geese

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# Heart of the Forest

YOUTH ESSAY AND SHORT STORY CONTEST

2ND PLACE

BRENDAN SHEN, 9, TAIPEI TAIWAN

Once upon a time there lived a girl named Rose, and she really hated nature. She believed that nature was an insult to humanity because it was useless in her thoughts. She littered everywhere just to harm nature. She crushed bugs and disrespected animals.

But one day while she was in the woods gathering firewood for the winter, the firewood seemed to have stuck to her body and was slowly becoming part of her skin. She cursed at the trees but realized that her whole body was becoming bark. She suddenly started running as fast as she could towards her house, but the trees engulfed her in a hug. She fought hard, stabbing at branches with her ax, but had to run in the other direction to escape. Rose fell down a large hole and blacked out. She woke up and around her were large, beautiful stones, and she realized she was still in the cave, but now she's a tree, with long branches and a skinny trunk. There were a lot of other trees in the cave as well, and they were all talking to each other. Rose was silent so none of the trees realized she was there before one old willow cocked his trunk towards the

hole and spotted Rose. The old willow spoke in a deep voice and said 'what are you doing here half tree?' And Rose, who was too frightened to speak, did not answer. The old willow laughed and started talking to the other trees: a sycamore, an oak, and a spruce. The willow turned back to Rose and asked if she knew about the heart of the forest, which could bring any half tree back into a human. This caught Rose's attention and she asked "What can turn me back into a human?'. And the old spruce smiled and told her to find the Sporeling clan, because of their knowledge of the heart of the forest.

And so it began.

Rose was trekking through the forest and saw a cottage and realized that she had found the Sporeling clan. The Sporelings had large red and white mushrooms on their head, and were all white. They treated her with hospitality and Rose began to feel guilt that she had never treated nature that way. Pine tea and rabbit meat were served at the wooden

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*Mr. Ginkgo*, Pastel, Leonard Cicio  
Work for sale

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table. Rose was given advice, advice about how to enter the warren of the trees, a mighty place where the fairies lived. The fairies would be able to tell her how to get to the heart of the forest they said.

Rose would have to cross the oak river to get to the fairies. The oak river was just nearby, so Rose could find it easily. But before she leapt into the river, the lead Sporeling asked if she could tell the humans that they needed help. All of the pollution the humans made was giving them a lot of work, and they want to have some rest and stop decomposing pollution. Rose easily crossed the river, floating like a log, where she found the fairies. They looked like small people that had large butterfly wings. They were very nice to her. And she asked about the heart of the forest, which they led her to through a large garden. They told her that there were other nature spirits like satyrs, trolls, and nymphs that all live in the wild. But the pollution spirits had killed a lot of them and they could not beat them. After hearing this story, Rose decided to help them.

On her way to the heart they were attacked by the pollution spirits, they came out of nowhere and beat up the fairies but the fairies told her to run and bought her time by fighting. Rose scrambled and ran towards the giant wooden heart that was the heart of the forest. She felt bad that the fairies helped her escape and that there was still a battle going on. She touched the heart of the forest and

thanked everyone who helped her. The old willow, the sporelings, and the fairies. And her hands and body started to melt off the bark.

She soon found herself back home, as if nothing happened. But Rose knew what she had to do now. Instead of going to throw her trash into the woods, she recycled all the things she could. Then she drew a poster, about the pollution spirits. An oil octopus, a zombie, a plastic bird, a robot, a giant mouth, and a trash dragon. She told everyone about this and people started to see what they did wrong. They could not understand the magic, but they began to understand what the right thing to do was, and that was all the humans needed to know.

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# Art Allows a Kind of Attention

INTERVIEW WITH MAISIE LUO  
INTERVIEWED BY VANESSA MENG  
TRANSCRIBED BY GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

**VM:** Could you tell us a little bit about your background and what led to the work you're doing now?

**ML:** I was born in China and came to the United States as a teenager to attend an arts high school. In high school I practiced a lot of Zen on my own, so I was always interested in religion, rituals, and spirituality. Then I studied art and religion at Swarthmore College. After college, I went to Harvard Divinity School to study more about Buddhist-related teachings and explore how that could influence my art practice. Right now I'm in an MFA program in painting. I make paintings and animations about animals and the environment. Buddhist influences are often the motivation for these artworks.

**VM:** It sounds like you knew early on that you wanted to pursue art. What was your thought process when you decided to become an artist?

**ML:** Even now, I don't know what it means to have this title of "artist." There were many opportunities in my life that I had to give up when my circumstances changed, but somehow I was always able to make art. Gradually, I realized that I depend on this and need to express myself in this way. There's a unique joy in making art that I wasn't able to get through other things.

**VM:** How do conscious and unconscious processes blend together when you're creating art?

**ML:** I take a lot of my inspiration from my daily life, as well as dreams and readings. When I encounter things that seem interesting to me, I have these visions in my mind of something that I haven't seen existing yet and feel a need to express. This need isn't for any purpose. I just have an urge to visualize it in material form.

Buddhist teachings and ethical frameworks shape what I engage with and what I think is important

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enough to put out. That shapes my visions and imagination. It motivates certain work. My work is focused on animals and the environment. With the current state of constant suffering for lots of animals and environmental degradation, I try to use my skill to address some of these horrible, ongoing problems.

I've been thinking a lot about what is unique about art, and I think that viewing art can help people cultivate care toward animals and the environment. Art allows a certain kind of attention. The very process of painting allows me to slow down and give attention to something outside of myself. After I paint anything—say, a tree—I know it more. It becomes a particular tree that is not just a general tree. I know how its pattern goes, how its leaves are shaped. I hope to use art to invite viewers to do the same—to slow down and give attention to something for a long time.

**VM:** One of your artworks about a whale particularly moved for me. Could you speak about this painting and how it relates to the concept you were just explaining?

**ML:** I was living in Boston, and I realized that there were a lot of fishermen along the coast. I found out that North Atlantic right whales roamed around that area in the summer. There are only 340 of them left in the world. Because they are so coastal, they are often trapped by fishing gears. That's why in this artwork it's a whale of suffering. There's even a tiny figure trying to untie the knots, as if to apologize. I was trying to imagine what it felt like to drag tons of fishing gears. Some of the whales drag the gears for up to six months, and some eventually give up and die. I could only imagine carrying a huge backpack and having to walk for hours. It would be so tiring.



With a North Atlantic Right Whale

Then I had this dream. I was swimming in the ocean, and a dolphin jumped up so high that other people got scared away. As I followed it down, the dolphin suddenly started floating in the air. I floated behind the dolphin as it guided me through the streets. It was just like swimming in air.

I didn't know what to do with the dream. Then when I was making the whale painting, I thought maybe I should create a swim through campus with this whale. This would help us imagine a world where sea levels rise and the whale is actually able to swim through freely. My advisor at the time, Terry Tempest Williams, and her husband Brooke helped me carry it through the campus at Harvard. It's on a seven-foot door, so it was too heavy for me to carry alone. No one stopped to look; no one paid attention. Still, it was very freeing. The whale was on it's own and wasn't bothered by anyone. That was a very special experience. I'm not disappointed by people not engaging; I'm just glad I did it. Sometimes creating an artwork is like that. Then there is a sister painting of what I imagine it would feel like a whale that is joyous and free (see next page).

**ML:** That was meat panels on a magnetic board. You lift the meat and you see the animals behind it. So if you lift the beef, you see a cow behind it. I was thinking about how these cut portions of the meat wrapped in plastic make it so easy for the consumer

to forget the origin of their food. It was actually from a living creature being raised in factory farm conditions, and randomly shipped to the slaughterhouse one day. It's about acknowledging when you buy meat that this is what comes before. Sometimes, with urgent issues, a work needs to be really blunt and make people feel uncomfortable. People have had mixed reactions to this painting. It's an interesting observation for me to see what the painting does, because it's so blunt that it stirs a lot of opinions (see painting in the next few pages).

**VM:** What kind of communion or communication are you aiming for between yourself and the audience for your art?

**ML:** I'm actually trying to figure this out by experimenting and making different kinds of works. I'm making animations right now. The experience for the audience is different from a painting, because when you watch a movie you tend to stay for the whole duration. That allows deeper engagement with more complex narratives. A painting can also do this, but it's difficult sometimes, especially if it's rather blunt—or just direct.

Narratives can create questions in the story without directly telling viewers what to do or think. That allows viewers to pay attention to details, use their imaginations, and think in their own way about it.



Breach

If they watch with someone else, they can even have conversations with their co-viewers. That's a very interesting thing, because I think in general that we need to have more conversations about animals, environments, and how we relate to them. But I'll also still continue to make very blunt works that say things that cannot be said in a softer or more indirect way.



Meat Aisle



*Monarch*, Photography, Vanessa Meng

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# monarch

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST 4TH PLACE  
KASEY RHODES, 14, TEXAS, USA

such a tiny thing  
this butterfly  
soaring like a kite  
through soft, cinnamon scented  
autumn morning light  
wings of stained glass  
the new born world her cathedral  
her, true to her name  
a queen

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# The Power of “What If?”: An Interview with E.D.E. Bell

INTERVIEWED BY GABRIEL ERTSGAARD  
TRANSCRIBED BY GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

*E.D.E. Bell (she/her, e/em) is a fiction writer and the founding Executive Editor of Atthis Arts, a small literary press in Detroit, Michigan. A passionate vegan and earnest progressive, she feels strongly about issues related to equality and compassion. Her works are quiet and queer and often explore conceptions of identity and community, including themes of friendship, family, and connection.*

**GE:** Why don't you tell us about your background and what led you to founding the indie literary press Atthis Arts?

**EB:** I grew up in a small town, studied engineering, and ended up working in technical and strategic roles in the defense industry, in alignment with those expectations. But I have always been drawn toward thinking about nonviolence and peace issues, compassion and kindness, and stories about

resisting oppression. The “true me” made its way out eventually. Initially, I started writing because I was mentally ill. I was very unhappy in some core, fundamental ways. I'm fortunate enough to have a spouse who is very good at some of the other aspects of running a small press—typesetting, finances, and legal things that are not a good fit for my creative brain. We ended up having other people approach us about publishing their works. It went from there to a full, traditional small press.

Initially we didn't have a focus, other than loving fantasy and wanting to share it. It became quickly clear, though, that our writers and potential readers were people drawn to less violent stories, or at least stories that didn't normalize and glorify violence. We have a lot of overlap with neurodivergent communities, queer communities, and disabled communities; people who felt like they didn't fit in,

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people who haven't accepted—or been accepted by—the system, and people who have experienced or worked to counter marginalization. Our mission description may still seem generic to some, but it fits: We strive for thoughtfulness, we believe in the author's authentic voice, and we thrive together with our creative community.

**GE:** Atthis Arts is primarily, though not exclusively, a speculative fiction press. What is it about speculative fiction that attracts you, and how does that relate to the peace and justice interests that are also central to your press?

**EB:** Speculative fiction has always existed in some form. People who either don't fit in or have dissatisfactions with the way things are—we find ourselves drawn to stories about “what if?” None of us invented the idea of “what if?” stories; we were drawn to other people's stories and then found ourselves envisioning our own. We find that pull extremely powerful because in our own minds we're thinking, “Why are things like this? Why couldn't they be different? What if?” I read a lot of Tad Williams early on (and still do) and it really helped me. It helped me manage my mental illness (which I didn't recognize at the time as mental illness), it helped me manage my depression, and it helped me understand that we live in a world where we can ask those questions together.

There's this perceived dichotomy between escapist entertainment and re-envisioning the world. For people who are often in their heads about such things, those are very related. We do enjoy speculative fiction, and we do escape into it, but part of that escape is the “what if?” of making things better. Whether the speculative fiction takes on a hopepunk form or a darker form, it all comes from the same place. It all comes from wanting our world to be better for the beings living in it.

**GE:** The theme for this issue is “re-enchantment,” but that implies a prior “disenchantment.” What do “re-enchantment” and “disenchantment” mean to you, and how does that relate to the work that Atthis Arts publishes?

**EB:** I think that any speculative fiction writer grapples with their own disenchantments, deeply. Whether it's personal repression, whether it's not feeling free to be who they are, whether it's seeing people marginalized in the world around them, there's always something that is deeply frustrating in seeing harm — in seeing harm allowed, unchallenged, even encouraged.

In fantasy writing, in particular, we take our disenchantments and transform them. To someone who doesn't read the genre much, the use of magic may just seem light and fanciful. And yes, it can be fun and should be fun. We deserve fun. However,

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there's also the idea of enchantment as opening the boundaries of the way things are. Magic opens the boundaries of our reality, but it's also a metaphor for the strict lines our society has drawn around the way things must be. We enchant ourselves simply through the defiant act of saying, "Things do not have to be this way." And if to illuminate that, we have literal magic, that's wonderful!

**GE:** Do you think that there's such a thing as re-enchantment in everyday life, and does fantasy fiction help point us toward this?

**EB:** Every time we challenge harm in any way, we re-enchant ourselves. That could be societal, dealing with these broader issues. That could be somebody who accepts their depression, but doesn't accept that depression defines the day ahead of them. That could be everything from "I could have a better day" to "I could help someone or allow myself to be helped today" to "I could challenge the system that hurts people." Every time we take the smallest act of defiance, that's our own re-enchantment.

That's the core of what speculative fiction is—defiance. You want to tell me that physics governs the world and I can't have flying wizards? I have flying wizards. It sounds trivial to people who don't understand, but defiance is never trivial. Even if it's defying physics, defying Earth, traveling through

outer space, it's all defying what we've been told we cannot defy. And that energy translates directly into our making this world better for all of us.

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# Fill the World With Magic

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST 5TH PLACE  
SOFIA MARRI, 12, BANGKOK, THAILAND

Listen to the trees

Feel the gentle breeze

Look at all the life surrounding us beyond what we see

Touch all the soft waves in the bright blue sea

Taste the fresh honey-filled air, that's all thanks to bees!

Wait-

Bottles floatin' 'round, plastic bags for years

Pollution starts to appear

Little animals, I'm so sorry dears

Now I am starting to understand it all, I hear

Life on earth, I feel your fear

Salty water trickles down my cheeks, a tear

We have to do something before it's too late

We can do this, I have lots of faith

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Let us take action  
Without any distractions  
Earth needs much more than our satisfaction

Ride a bike instead of bus  
Make some speeches and discuss  
Raise awareness of this unfairness,  
stop being careless!

There are other problems in the world too!  
Some of them are even new!  
War & poverty  
Gender inequality  
Cutting down all the bamboo!

Conflicts are everywhere  
Diseases spread as fast as lightning, We have lives to spare  
*We can re-enchant this world, all it takes is a bit of kindness. Connect with Earth,  
and feel its beauty and love; like a mother cradling a child, It shelters us in its arms of  
life, colorful and full of diversity. It's wonderful.*

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# Something I Forgot & Something I Remember

MEENA CHEN

This is a piece that is part of a larger concentration of works depicting the Hindu gods Shiva and Parvati throughout different time periods and across cultures. The worship of Hindu gods is like worshipping an amalgamation of ancestors, real life heroes, and notable figures in the stories that we pass down from generation to generation. Because these real-life people possess god-like qualities, but can not all be remembered by name, they are remembered as incarnations, as reflections or fractions of god coming down to earth to help us along, and they gradually blend together to shape or fall under the image of the major deities we worship, like Shiva and Parvati. This process of worship acknowledges the magic and fantasy of our

everyday lives, within ourselves, and our daily routines/rituals. Because of this, we aspire to the image of God, which is based on us. We are also all the gods of our own stories, meaning we all possess magical capabilities and powers simply in the ways that we think, create, live, imagine, love, and worship.

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I painted this image, as a memory of my own ancestors and the gods within them, in some imagined version of our homeland(s). When I was younger, my Ammamma often brushed my hair with oil and put it into two little braids. This ritual has been practiced for so many generations, it becomes a way to reach back through time to embody our ancestors, and in doing so, the divine within all of us.

*Something I Forgot*

Medium: Acrylics on Canvas

Price: \$122



This is a partner piece to *Something I Forgot*. Just as *Something I Forgot* depicts the divinity of ancient, everyday life in the distant homeland of my ancestors, *Something I Remember* shows us the divinity of laughter and human connection in a modern-day home. Today we can still access divinity, history, and ancient connection to our ancestors and spirit by living through our daily lives as humans and embracing the present.

*Something I Remember*

Medium: Acrylics on Canvas

Price: \$122

**NOTE:** *Something I Forgot* and *Something I Remember* are a pair and bought together will cost \$222



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# Inexhaustible Wonder: An Interview with Michael Fox

INTERVIEWED BY RASHAD REHMAN  
TRANSCRIBED BY GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

*Michael Fox is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Dean of Arts at Saint Peter's Seminary in London, Ontario. He holds a Ph.D from Laval University in Quebec City, Quebec. His area of focus is the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas.*

**RR:** In your courses you teach about the primacy of wonder for philosophy. What does that mean to you?

**MF:** An essential component of wonder is the desire to know the cause of an effect. A good example is Pythagorus who discovered that on every right angle triangle, the square of the hypotenuse is equal to the square of the remaining sides. Today we call that  $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ . We have a fragment which cites Apollodorus the Calculator as saying that Pythagorus sacrificed a hecatomb (group of oxen) when he made this discovery. He performed

an act of thanksgiving. That is very intriguing.

I think Pythagorus had a profound sense that his discovery was a gift which enabled him to come in contact with a transcultural truth: a truth which is immutable, a truth which is eternal. That realization gave him the sense that he'd had a taste of the divine. That made him realize that he was also immortal. If we can agree (at least by supposition) that he came in contact with an eternal truth, doesn't that also mean that he himself was eternal? How could a person grasp the "why" which is eternal and yet not in some fashion himself be eternal?

There's a certain kind of double discovery going on here. He not only discovered the cause related to the right angle triangle, but he also discovered something about himself. He thanked the divine for

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hat. That celebration, I think, was a common good. It's inexhaustible, so everybody can participate in it. That contrasts to a private good where my gain is always your loss. Wonder gives us a sense of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving gives us a sense of celebration where everyone can participate.

**RR:** When you speak of wonder being connected to thanksgiving, what kind of worldview does this require?

**MF:** Harkening back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he maintained that passion follows reason. This contrasts with what many early Renaissance thinkers argued, namely that reason follows passion. If you're presented with two propositions—"I desire it because it is good" versus "it is good because I desire it"—I think wonder is a function of the first. I have a mind as a human being that can apprehend reality in terms of the good, the true, or the beautiful. Then I can rouse myself to want to

**MF:** Harkening back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he maintained that passion follows reason. This contrasts with what many early Renaissance thinkers argued, namely that reason follows passion. If you're presented with two propositions—"I desire it because it is good" versus "it is good because I desire it"—I think wonder is a function of the first. I have a mind as a human being that can apprehend reality in terms of the good, the true, or the beautiful. Then I can rouse myself to want to

embrace it further with my passions. On the other hand, if you follow someone like Hobbes who argued that something is good solely because I desire it, then there is no ground for wonder.

The Aristotelian view allows me to form community in a genuine sense. With the Hobbesian view, there's a certain kind of fragmentation among people. If everything is a function of my passion, then my desired object cannot be shared with you without diminishing it. Therefore, I'm in constant fear of losing what I have. Passion on its own cannot aim for the common good.

**RR:** You also cover G. K. Chesterton's "The Ethics of Elfland" from *Orthodoxy* in one of your courses, where he uses the fairy tale genre to critique the scientific worldview. What is Chesterton up to in that essay, and how does it relate to wonder and enchantment?

**MF:** That's a real shift from the Pythagorean approach. Chesterton is trying to make a case that the world we live in is not solely a function of force and mass. Rather, there is also such a thing as intentionality or final cause. But if we maintain final causality, then matter and agency are for the sake of fulfilling some kind of intentionality related to the Creator. So it becomes magical, almost like a fairy tale, because everything is ultimately seen in light of the intentionality of the one who put these

things in motion.

He gives this example: If you blow the horn, the castle will fall down. That doesn't make any sense if you're only connected to matter and agency. But if it's been ordained by somebody who has created this relationship, then it's amazing. It's wondrous. That makes us open up to the mystery of creation, because you can't measure that response like you can with matter and agency.

If you define wonder as I did earlier, as the desire to know the cause of something, that doesn't necessarily lead to appreciating mystery or the sense that I'm participating in something greater than myself. That is, I'm participating in a mystery that I continue to ruminate on and explore. If there's only agent cause and material cause, yes I may wonder about that, but it's a very stunted form of wonder. The marvel of Chesterton calls me beyond myself and makes me realize that I am not the measure of my existence.

**RR:** How would you respond to someone who sees the world as infused with so much evil and crisis, that from their perspective, the capacity to wonder is just the result of having fortunate socio-economic conditions?

**MF:** That's a very difficult question. There is tremendous suffering in the world. Many of us are

profoundly broken by that suffering. We're all broken on some level, but some of us more so than others. As for the philosophical act in reference to wonder—that may be something for which people say, “I can't do it. I'm wrestling with deep wounds which I need to overcome before I can do anything else.”

I look upon your question with reference to Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. Ivan tells Alyosha that if God gave him a ticket to heaven, he would kindly return it. The reason is that he cannot reconcile a good God with the suffering of innocent children. Ivan has this problem because he sees himself as having a Euclidean mind.\* And that Euclidean mind could not fathom the relationship between a good God and horrific suffering.

It seems like Ivan's Euclidean mind is what Chesterton was trying to argue against in “The Ethics of Elfland.” In Chesterton's essay, everything is Euclidean, strictly speaking. You're given a major premise, a minor premise, and out pops a conclusion. It can't be otherwise. But if you see beyond Euclid to a teleological aspect related to the manifestations of a mind, then you're involved with mystery. Ivan, I think, could have had a sense of wonder related to suffering if he wasn't so entrapped in that Euclidean approach.

Take Alyosha, for example. Alyosha is the hero in

*Brothers Karamazov*. Why this person for the hero? He's young, he's inexperienced, he comes from a very dysfunctional family—and everybody loves him! I think he's loved because he sees the mystery in the world and in each person he comes in contact with. Grushenka is marginalized by society because of her past life, but Alyosha sees her according to what is best and beautiful in her. The mystery in her.

Wonder is not just about one thing; it's about all of existence. Our existence involves on a daily basis some form of suffering. We have to wonder not only about the good things, but also about horrific things. In the confrontation of evil, especially as it relates to ourselves, I think we have to be open to the mystery of it all. That's easier said than done. But if we're like Ivan, then we're going to be crushed by that suffering.

**RR:** What books would you recommend for those of us who want to become re-enchanted with the world?

**MF:** Anything by Plato. Plato is a good introduction to the life of philosophy, the life of wonder. His work involves a certain drama that we can participate in while reading. Anything by Aristotle. Aristotle and Plato go hand in hand. After that, which is quite a bit, I would strongly suggest the commentaries on Aristotle by Saint

Thomas Aquinas. A lot of us jump to the *Summa Theologica* or *Summa contra Gentiles*, which are both great, but when you read the commentaries you see a master at work regarding how to read a rich philosophical text.

Among the moderns, one of my favorites is Josef Pieper's *Leisure, the Basis for Culture*. He has the right spirit of philosophy, and he's very instructive as to how we can capture that spirit. A book that really affected me in my youth was Mortimer J. Adler's *How to Read a Book*. He gives a good introduction to the importance of reading primary texts. Commentaries are good and important; they help you think about primary texts, but we shouldn't replace primary texts with secondary texts. There's so much, but initially Plato and Aristotle. If you want just a taste, start with Plato's *Apology* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

*Editor's Note: In Dostoevsky's novel, Ivan Karamazov argues that just as parallel lines can never intersect in Euclidean geometry, good and evil can also never meet. According to this logic, Ivan insists, the suffering of a single child is sufficient to refute the goodness of God.*

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# The Gift At My Door

RIHAM AZIZ EL-DIN, EGYPT

There is a pregnant cat that keeps sitting on the doormat of my home.  
She just sits there and waits.  
What kind of faith this cat has?  
She waits at the doormat,  
she sits still.  
Not knowing at what time, I will open the door and put some food.  
She waits.  
Not knowing if I am here or not.  
She waits.  
Not knowing if this is the right place.  
She waits.  
Not knowing of I am the one who might open the door and put some food or  
Other neighbor who might scare her and  
She has to run away with her heavy weight.  
She waits.  
Not knowing that last night I opened the door and couldn't find her.  
I needed her to be there.  
It was painful to feel the missing of her.  
I worried that she might not ever come back.  
The voice inside me whispers;  
She will be back  
She will find her way  
She Knows.  
This morning, the cat is sitting at the doormat of my home.  
She sits still.  
She waits.  
She comes  
She knows.  
This kind of unshaken faith, I pray for.

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# The Trust-Fall: Crafting a Re- Enchanted Present

EMMA LOVEJOY

Like almost everyone, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically rewrote my future plans. I finished my B.A in spring of 2020, then moved home to regroup and figure out what to do next. And then I stayed there, trying to figure out what to do next, and making no progress. Nearly two years after graduating, it felt like I had nothing to show for it.

The hardest thing about having the rug pulled out from under you just as you're supposed to be taking your first adult steps into the world, is that you have no reason to trust yourself to handle it. You have so little history with yourself to look to for reassurance that you're going to be okay. The confidence to take steps, to move forward, comes from self-trust, and without it, you become stuck.

I think we have all experienced this to one degree or another, whether due to depression or life circumstances or bad habits, or some combination

of the three. The longer you're stuck, the more stuck you feel, and the more out-of-reach your best options appear. I could not move forward, because I didn't trust my own judgment to choose a forward path. What felt, at the time, like trying to build a life for myself, amounted only to treading water.

The first months of 2022 brought more dramatic changes for me. Some changes were good, and some less good, but the specifics matter less than the result: I was shaken out of the routine I had become trapped in, and forced to re-evaluate the goals I was ostensibly working toward. When I really stopped to think about it, I found that I could barely identify what it was that I wanted out of my present, or my future. What I wanted had been largely buried by all the things I told myself were simply too far out of reach. With that fresh perspective, the general boredom and loneliness I had been telling myself were normal, unavoidable,

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or all in my head, crystallized into very real unhappiness. I became, in a word, disenchanted with the life I had been trying to convince myself I was content with.

Which brought me back to the problem of trust. If I had spent nearly two years convincing myself to settle into a life that made me miserable, surely I couldn't be trusted to find my own way out of it. I needed to manufacture that self-trust essentially from scratch.

**This was my trust-fall:** In the summer of 2022, on some mix of impulse and intuition, I moved from my hometown in coastal Maine, to the Boston area.

The move was a risk. Although relocating would allow me to transfer from an online to an on-campus program at UMASS, which would provide me with peers and some structure to anchor me, I didn't know anyone in Boston starting out. Nor did I consider it an especially pleasant city, or have experience living in an urban setting - much less on my own. And, while what I would leave behind might have been lonely or unfulfilling, it was also safe, and safety is something I value highly.

Dropping everything to move would mean gambling that safety against the hope that I could build something good for myself somewhere new. I want to be someone who values their own happiness enough to take risks for it. I want it to come naturally to bet on myself.

And so, the trust-fall. I threw myself into something entirely new, somewhere entirely new, with no choice but to trust that I could catch myself.

If I'm honest, I didn't expect that I would like living here. I couldn't trust my instinct that moving here would, itself, make me happy. I half-believed that the point of the exercise would be to make the best of it - that that was where I would get to "catch" myself. I thought "I'll finish grad school, and then figure out what comes next after that. I can handle it for two years." I thought I was manufacturing myself a chance to be brave, to be resilient, and to figure out what I'd do next.

*It was* a chance to be brave, and to be resilient: settling in somewhere new isn't easy, and neither is meeting people, or learning how to navigate the city on your own. Living here is expensive, and loud, and often overwhelming. It can take as long as 90 minutes for me to commute to campus, 4 miles away. The sense of never being alone is a constant drain on my mental energy. And, I've been pleasantly surprised to discover that I love it here. I love the pace of the city, and the currents of art and music that are never very far beneath the surface, and the communities of passionate people creating beautiful things. And most of all, I love that I can see myself staying here. I'm not just waiting to have a better idea, or for something better to come along: I'm building a life that I love now, and that I think I will keep on loving as I go on living it.



*Moonrise from the North End, Emma Lovejoy*

Exploring my new city has been a spectacular adventure. I've found favorite places - to create, to recharge, to enjoy the first hot sunshine of spring and find mundane, beautiful things. I've stumbled, almost entirely by accident, upon hopes and dreams I could never have admitted to myself before, let alone articulated to others.

Trusting myself to take what felt like an impossibly big step and relocate has given me opportunities to see myself outside of my comfort zone, and to make intentional choices about when and how to push myself. Instead of defaulting to the assumption that

any and every change is out of reach, I've found the confidence to try anyway - and to believe that I will be able to handle the outcome, whatever it is.

Instead of unhappily continuing with online school for the sense of stability that academia can offer, I've been able to return to an in-person program. Getting back on campus, in turn, opened the door for me to explore and to fall in love with the field of Public History. After a lifetime trying to choose one interest to pursue at the expense of all the others, I've found a field that allows me to follow my curiosity and utilize the skills that come naturally to



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me. I feel, for the first time in years, that I'm working toward my own future, rather than simply working on something because it's "what you're supposed to do."

I have been able to give myself space to evaluate what ways of being bring me joy, and what vocations bring me a sense of fulfillment - and I have been able to pursue those things. I've prioritized my writing, and as a result I have my first published piece of fiction slated for this fall. At the same time, I'm learning to distance myself from the deeply-programmed feeling that a Capital-C Career is the only kind worth having, and the only way to prove that your work is worth doing. "Where does this job lead?" or "how do you make that a career?" are questions that steal the joy. Yes, I have found a field that I love, and yes, I believe I will find fulfilling work within it. But I'm learning to focus on the fulfillment, not the field.

Giving myself a clean slate was an incredible opportunity for self-reinvention. It's allowed me space to explore and embody the person I'm trying to grow up to be. I finally feel like I'm showing up for myself, as myself. And I've been lucky enough to surround myself with wonderful, supportive people for this process of reinvention: people who are kind, and compassionate, and who are also trying to learn what it could mean to live happy

lives, if we can simply trust ourselves to take the leap.

My trust-fall gave me back authorship of my future plans. They're different than the future I imagined for myself in 2019, true. But they're also far more vivid and more hopeful than the best I could imagine in 2021. And, more importantly, my trust-fall laid the groundwork for me to believe that I am capable of creating a future for myself - no matter what my present may be.

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# L'ultimo giorno

CORA ALLISON

The yellow lights in Asheville last a few seconds too long.

There is a pause long enough to hurdle through at a breakneck speed, and only after you flash under it do you realize you had more time. More time to move slowly.

Maybe if the yellow had given way to the red sooner, I would have seen what was coming.

Maybe I would have seen things more clearly, for what they are, and not for the way I wished.

Maybe I would have seen your disappearance into your work as escapism, not dedication.

Maybe I would have seen your lack of passion as an affair, not exhaustion.

Maybe I would have stopped making excuses for lies I forgave too quickly and too often.

Instead, there is a crumbling, a falling out of, an uncoupling taking place. It is not graceful or swift, and it breaks me into new pieces every morning. The sun rises and there is a bed molded to the shape of you, and I am alone.

Sometimes, it feels like the duration of what our love has been and was promised to be is occupying all the air in this house.

Sometimes, the sun peeks through my existential doom, and I feel blessed to hear the bluebirds in the Dogwood trees.

Sometimes, between phone calls with my mom, I see the roots of her in me helping me claw my way out.

Sometimes, I become re-encharmed with solitude and the rebuilding of myself and my life.

Sometimes, I believe there is more for me than this, and far more for me than you.

On Wednesday, I bought myself a yellow bunch of Ranunculus-- I arranged it in robin-egg-blue pottery I made in Italy.. I did the laundry. I went to work. I wept. I slept.

Today, I walked around the lake and took deep breaths of wet Magnolia.

Today, my mom held me and told me I am enough on my own.

Today, I cried in the kitchen as lyrics of perseverance floated through the speaker.

Today, I ate, showered, moved my body, and saw the sun.

Tonight, I learned you lied and I asked you for the key to our house.

There is not much that I do know, having much of my reality cruelly and quickly refuted. But each day is new, even when it hurts the same. To be enchanted with such visceral pain is work; in one breath it is both excruciating and life-giving.

Tomorrow, I will try again.

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Cora Allison, Digital Collage

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# Kindness is Key

YOUTH ESSAY AND SHORT STORY CONTEST

3RD PLACE

CADENCE LIU, 13, CALIFORNIA, USA

2020 was a very hard year for everyone, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic and racism spreading around like germs. It was a time of uncertainty, none of us would've thought this day would come. No one knew if they were still going to be alive the next day, everything was a mystery. The world was deteriorating and all the news documented was rioting and protest, each day we saw the number of deaths keep going up by thousands. In the future, I hope that no one would have to suffer like we did that year. As a society we can be more mindful of what is going on in the world and take action, it all starts from the smallest act of kindness.

One of the most pivotal events at this time was the shocking death of George Floyd. The cause of his death was unnecessary, he was at a cigar shop and paid with a counterfeit twenty dollar bill. Even though his actions caused him to get caught by two police officers, it was wrong for the white police to kneel on George's neck causing him not being able to breathe. The brutality of his death was taken in

shock by people all around the world. This revealed the seriousness of racism and police brutality in America. Soon after, anger rose and a movement was established. The movement emphasized the importance of Black people should not be treated unfairly, just like the protest that happened in 2013 "Black Lives Matter."

I felt very uncertain on what the world was going to look like during and after this. It felt unsafe everywhere I went, people were angry at each other and out of nowhere violence felt like it could happen. It changed the way I viewed the world too, my parents were telling us about the news and safety rules we had to follow. These past three years were a dark time for everyone. Instead of it being unsafe violence-wise, it was unsafe virus-wise. Everyone was scared to touch one another, and the whole world turned upside down after this pandemic. During this time, the world felt very disconnected. No one was physically talking to each other, if you were Asian people would give you the stare or a bad look, to make you feel uncomfortable

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and at fault because everyone thought China brought the pandemic over. I still remember the time when Trump was president, he would blame this virus all on China and call it like “the Wuhan virus” or “the China virus”. Instead of bringing people together and facing this challenge, he basically created hatred between Asians and Americans. It felt like we needed to be reminded of what kindness is again, words can hurt someone and eventually cause violence.

Being kind is like spreading immunity to everyone, it looks like helping others or even making a difference in someone’s life. Being kind doesn’t have to be being the president of the United States, even the smallest things can make the biggest difference. Saying hi or how was your day can make a difference in somebody’s day, and it looks like a smile on the face or even a wink! Being kind can also be lending a helping hand, teaching someone something or helping others, or just telling a joke when someone’s down can be kind. Kindness resembles all the aspects of important core values, like being respectful, responsible, trustworthy etc. It is the main pillar and base of all of those things. Kindness can make a day, a year, or even a life. Giving your teacher an appreciation letter might not mean much to you, but can mean the world to the teacher.

still live in a world with violence and hatred, with the war in Ukraine, multiple shootings across the US and a huge environmental crisis. Despite the various crises going on, I still believe we could all be kind to each other. It does not take a lot of effort to do it, and even if you are struggling, being kind to someone will only make you feel better and it will make the world better. Looking back, so many things have gone by. What kind of people do we want to be? Going forward, who do we want to be remembered as? Would we want to continue to be mean to humanity or would we want to change? I think that time is slipping away from our hands, taking action now might even be too late. So try spreading kindness each day to people around, it all starts from you!

Right now, we still live in a world with Covid, we

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# Fighting Against Climate Change to Build Positive Peace: Proposal of an Intersectional Panel on Environmental Peacebuilding in Tribal Conflicts

BRYAN ZHEN LI

“If we are to achieve the SDGs, we need to act boldly and urgently to reduce the risks that environmental degradation and climate change present for conflict and commit to protecting our planet from the debilitating effects of war”. ---  
António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations

## I. Introduction

In our modern world, we often find ourselves disconnected from the natural environment around us, leading to a sense of disenchantment with the world. This disconnection has resulted in a separation of peace and ecology, where we view them as separate issues rather than intertwined

aspects as a whole picture. Imagine a world where we live in harmony with nature and recognize the importance of creating a sustainable future for ourselves and future generations. This enchanting vision can inspire us to work towards a common cause and bring about positive change at the grassroots level. At the grassroots level, we can come together and work towards this enchanting idea of sustainability, uniting people of different backgrounds and perspectives for a common cause.

Resources and conflict have always been inextricably linked. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “over the last 60 years, at least 40 percent of all internal

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conflicts have been linked to the exploitation of natural resources” (2022), and the possibility of conflicts related to natural resources is twice as likely as other conflicts to reoccur (United Nations, n.d.). This reminds peacebuilders that, to end conflict and build peace, we need strategies and actions that combat climate change and environmental degradation. Currently, I am a graduate student at the New York University Center for Global Affairs. My research and proposal hope to mitigate tribal violence through bringing communities together with the common goal of fighting climate change.

To prevent more violence and tragedies ensuing because of the continued shortage of natural resources in the future, both negative and positive peace needs to be built in tribes still in conflict. Negative peace is the absence of violence, for example, the conditions produced by peace agreements or ceasefires (Galtung, 2007); while positive peace is “the presence of harmony, intended or not” (Galtung, p.2, 2007). Although negative peace is indispensable when stopping direct violence, the only way to put an end to structural violence and have a lasting peace status is to build positive peace. To build positive peace, the issues stemming from the structure of the society such as poverty, famine, discrimination, social injustice, and so on must be solved. If structural violence cannot be abolished, violence could be brought again in the future even if a peace

agreement was formed.

My research leads me to understand that the use of renewable energy is directly related to positive peace. This proposal focuses on building positive peace among different tribes in conflict due to the shortage of natural resources by introducing an intersectional panel for fighting climate change. An intersectional panel would engage participants from the national government, representatives from tribes including seniors, women and youth, civil society and businesses, and external sectors covering economic, political, and social sectors. These participants are expected to bring various opinions of the conflict context and thoughts on building positive peace via fighting climate change. While many climate change mitigation strategies will be employed, an emphasis will be placed on renewable energy (Schirch, 2022). Therefore, the proposed panel is aimed at designing and implementing intersectional policies and projects for renewable energy development that are aligned with local priorities. With renewable energy as a common goal, people of differing tribes, stakeholders with different priorities can come together in peace.

## **II. Environmental Peacebuilding Theory and Data Evidence**

The theory of this proposal is based on environmental peacebuilding “as the process through which environmental challenges shared by

the (former) parties to a violent conflict are turned into opportunities to build lasting cooperation and peace” (Dresse et al., 2019, p.104). This proposal suggests that an intersectional panel should follow three trajectories to build environmental peace in places with tribal conflicts: 1) a technical trajectory aiming to reduce environmental destruction; 2) a restorative justice trajectory aiming to rebuild and restore neutral and common values and norms that expands across differences; and 3) a sustainability trajectory aiming for equitable resource distribution and sustainable development.

Local priorities must be the focal point of all three trajectories. Fighting climate change requires local knowledge, while peacebuilding also demands knowledge of local historical, cultural, and social norms instead of colonialist commitments.

Environmental peacebuilding embraces decolonizing peacebuilding by accounting for “the multifaceted, long-term nature of environmental problems and the social, cultural, and political identities that are vested in the immaterial values of natural resources” (Dresse et al., p.103, 2019).

While a collective and top-down initiative is necessary, if the local demands are not satisfied, it will fail to restore harmony between the parties, and potentially cause conflicting interests to arise (Dresse et al., 2019).

My research collects all the data from Our World in Data organization to test the correlation between

climate change and peace. By using a one-way fixed effects model (FE model), which has fixed effects on countries, to see the relationship between renewable energy consumption per capita, CO2 emission, and deaths in conflict and conflicts within middle-low-income countries (negative peace model). This model shows us that within 34 middle-low-income countries when holding the CO2 emission constant, one MWh increase in renewable energy consumption per capita in the previous year predicts an increase of 114 in the number of deaths in conflict and terrorism within those countries in the current year. However, this result is not statistically significant. While holding renewable energy consumption per capital constant, within 34 middle-low-income countries observed, a one-ton increase in CO2 emission in the previous year predicts a decrease of 0.18 in the number of deaths in the current year. However, this result is neither meaningful nor statistically significant.

As Galtung mentioned positive peace is “the presence of harmony, intended or not” (p.2, 2007), this harmony includes tangible elements such as economic, political, and social stability, as well as people’s intangible feelings of happiness stemming from their life wellness and satisfaction. This research operationalizes positive peace by utilizing a “life satisfaction” indicator, which is a self-report survey that measures individuals’ satisfaction with various aspects of their lives, such as their physical and mental health, economic status, sense of



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security, and overall sense of purpose and meaning. I decided to use "life satisfaction" as a measure of positive peace because I believe positive peace is a subjective experience rather than an objective one. A self-report survey on life satisfaction allows us to better understand individuals' personal feelings and perceptions of peace, making it a more accurate gauge of positive peace. The second FE model is to see the relationship between renewable energy consumption per capita and life satisfaction within middle-low-income countries (positive peace model). This model shows us that within 34 middle-low-income countries when holding the CO<sub>2</sub> emission constant, one MWh increase in renewable energy consumption per capita in the previous year predicts an increase of 0.20 in the score of life satisfaction within those countries in the current year. Moreover, this result is statistically significant. While CO<sub>2</sub> emission has neither a substantively nor statistically significant relationship with life satisfaction, the direction of the relationship is negative. Therefore, climate change actions are more related to positive peace rather than negative peace. This means combatting climate change plays an important role in positive peacebuilding. Based on this environmental peacebuilding theory and the data evidence, this proposal introduces an intersectional panel for building both negative and positive peace through combating climate change.

### III. Intersectional Panel on Environmental Peacebuilding for Tribal Conflicts

Based on the environmental peacebuilding theory and positive peace theory, the proposal herein recommends an intersectional panel to be dedicated to building positive peace for tribal conflicts with a focus on fighting climate change. In my opinion, the idea of environmental peacebuilding could be a more practical and effective approach for resolving grassroots and local conflicts, particularly in communities with limited resources. Environmental peacebuilding requires local knowledge and skills to address the unique context and needs of the people in the community. By utilizing this approach, we can work towards creating sustainable solutions that benefit both the environment and the local population.

Since climate change is a universal issue affecting all stakeholders in one society the intersectional panel should consist of the national government, representatives from tribes including seniors, women, and youth, civil society and businesses, and external sectors covering economic, political, and social sectors. This combines both top-down government-led initiatives to build stability and bottom-up civil society-led initiatives covering all economic, political, and social sectors to restore social justice. And only through cooperation among each sector can build positive peace in tribal conflicts.

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Large-scale technical projects for renewable energy and environmental change need large-scale financial and political support (Dresse et al., 2019).

Therefore, a government-led effort must be in demand. The national government is expected to provide financial, policy, and legislative support for renewable energy development and distribution.

Through competent and transparent approaches by the national government, greater public-sector credibility can be achieved.

Civil society is expected to assist and supervise government officials to facilitate renewable energy development, distribution, and positive peace process. In this context, civil society includes local NGOs, churches, universities, cultural institutions, media, and other relevant citizen-led groups.

Businesses are anticipated to play a crucial role in the funding, implementation, and management of renewable energy projects. Local businesses are expected to innovate more technical solutions for environmental issues and to create more employment opportunities for local people.

Businesses cooperating with young people from universities and other educational or vocational institutes will create a domestic cyclical business model on renewable energy. In other words, the local businesses hope for earning capital from the current renewable energy projects and then reinvest it in training and educational boot camps, which aim to train more young people with related

knowledge and skills. Then, the young generation is expected to continue to innovate and gain economic benefits for future investment. In the long run, the people in tribes can fundraise for their future projects on economic and social issues with their own money, which will be a massive step for decolonization. Here decolonization refers to the peacebuilding process that empowers the local people, who live in the conflict context and suffer from the conflict, to own authority and autonomy over their future and resources.

External actors here include international NGOs, foreign government agencies, foreign businesses, and other kinds of foreign institutions. Although external actors are expected to only play the role of an observer in the panel, it is still important for them to provide local people with financial support and novel forms of technology at the beginning (Dresse et al., 2019). Moreover, external actors also are anticipated to be an oversight mechanism on corruption and misbehaviors among the national government or local tribes. Yet, to decolonize the peacebuilding process, external actors can only stand aside and cannot determine what and how the panel operates.

Environmental peacebuilding would be doomed if the local demands and priorities were not heeded (Dresse et al., 2019). The local tribes play the central role in this panel. As renewable resources are also a part of natural resources, local people have the

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deepest knowledge of where to explore natural resources and how to explore them. The representatives from local tribes are expected to bring their people's demands and voices to this panel and provide proposals for renewable energy exploration and development policies or projects based on the local people's priorities.

Regarding tribes still in conflict, this panel is anticipated to be a neutral space for them to gain mutual understanding and respect. Following the technical and restorative justice trajectory, it is expected to see environmental protection and resource development as their mutual interests and benefits. Through cooperation in finding technical solutions to environmental issues, they could gradually build mutual trust. Then, this mutual trust could bring collaboration and "transboundary interdependence" on other social and political issues. This could result in the restoration of social justice, which would bring sustainability and balanced resource distribution among tribes.

Moreover, other tribes are expected to be mediators within the panel for those in conflict. Tribes who have solved conflicts themselves could share the experience with those still in conflict. A domino effect here is once two tribes make a peace agreement and start cooperating on renewable energy development, it will become easier for all other tribes in conflict to follow and learn from the first two groups as an example. This process will

lead to negative peace among all tribes and generate the beginning of positive peacebuilding.

In addition, local tribes are also anticipated to execute their supervisory role in this panel to ensure all the projects and policies are created and implemented based on local priorities.

#### IV. Conclusion and Discussion

Climate change leads to a shortage of natural resources and environmental destruction, which exacerbates the violence among tribes (UNEP, 2022). The intersectional panel here is a creative approach that focuses on renewable energy exploration and development that brings the national government, representatives from tribes including seniors, women and youth, civil society, local businesses, and external actors together.

Environmental peacebuilding can be the theoretical framework for the panel to engage in new ways to build negative peace in the short term and positive peace in the long run based on local priorities through 1) technical trajectory aiming to reduce environmental destruction; 2) restorative justice trajectory aiming to rebuild and restore neutral and common values and norms; and 3) sustainability trajectory aiming for equitable resources distribution and sustainable development (Dresse et al., 2019).

Yet, the environmental peacebuilding theory is still

in its infancy, which requires more practical cases and data to be refined. And the intersectional panel is only one of the suggested ways to build environmental peace in a tribal conflict context, which still needs to be tested if it fully corresponds to the local history and social norms. Moreover, although renewable energy does play a crucial role in combating climate change and its impacts, it needs more data covering various aspects of climate change to evaluate the environmental peacebuilding theory and to find the most effective approach for peacebuilding to fighting climate change. In addition, corruption issue is always a big concern in any intervention. A detailed discussion on controlling and reducing corruption is still indispensable.

Above all, since the root cause for most tribal violence today is the dearth of natural resources resulting from climate change, all actors in conflicts must pay attention to solving climate change challenges. This unity of goal presents a new opportunity for the local people to decolonize peacebuilding and build positive peace aligned with their social norms and values to fight against climate change.

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# Mother Tree

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST 5TH PLACE  
DEREK MENG, 11, CALIFORNIA, USA

The sounds of falling trees,  
Are now closer than ever,  
My children and friends,  
Crash and fall to the ground,  
The cries of pain and agony,  
But never of hate,  
The fungus bring back messages of goodbyes,  
As the remainder of us try to support each other,  
The Devil is now knocking at the door,  
But I do not fear it,  
Because I know that life is forever,  
I know that somewhere out in the world,  
My seeds will grow and my children will flourish and bring life,  
Again making a forest and again producing a new generation  
So take my seeds all mighty rustling wind,  
And carry them across lands and seas, across rivers and valleys  
To a place where these seeds can plant their roots down hard and swell,  
And to the powerful buzzing saws wield by apes,  
Cut me down and use my wood to make your goods,  
So that way I can finally find my everlasting peace.

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# A Courageous Woman

ARIANA RASTELLI



The story of the painting called “Twaza Mubyeyi,” begins when my husband, Brandon, and I were living in a tent. It was a big tent - we had a queen-sized mattress in there, and by the standards of our itinerant community it was a mansion - but the glamour of free-living was wearing us both down. The winters in Maine, outside of a hiker hostel where we had pitched our tent, were very cold. Even our valiant wood heater, the pipe for which poked out of a reinforced hole in the in the tent canopy, did not stave off the worst of the wintery conditions.

It was our personal struggles for warmth and comfort that led us to feel particularly charitable when one of Brandon’s friends, Damien, across the ocean in Rwanda, asked us to help him and his community. There were many problems plaguing Damien’s small community of Shingiro, Rwanda. Closest to my heart was the concern of menstrual pads for young girls. Once a girl went through puberty, she typically had to drop out of school because she would not be able to access clean, effective sanitary pads.

We thought creatively about the problem. We could not just send money, mostly because we didn’t have enough of it ourselves. We could not send disposable pads, because that would only solve the problem for a brief time, and shipping would be expensive. We decided to send 100 reusable fabric pads. They are washed after use and re-worn. This

method of menstrual hygiene is not typical in the United States, but it is sanitary and sustainable.

With the money I was making selling greeting cards to tourists, I bought 100 reusable pads and sent them in a box with a few sweets and school supplies to Rwanda. From there, my husband would decide to start a non-profit organization called CACHE (Compassion, Altruism, Community, Humanity, and Empowerment). We would eventually buy the girls a sewing machine so they could make their own pads and sell the surplus to their community.

CACHE foundation went on to start a Women’s Farming Cooperative, extend micro-loans and grants, and began an educational program covering topics of socio-emotional health, human development, comprehensive sex ed, and trauma informed topics.

Eventually, Brandon got into a Veteran’s Affairs program called Vocational Rehab. He used this program to pay for a Bachelor’s degree at Kansas State University in Peace and Conflict Resolution. We moved across the country and rented a small house. I decided to join the art department at Kansas State and took a painting course. I was manic with joy: warm, comfortable, and surrounded by artists. I decided I would share my good fortune by painting a special canvas in order to raise funds for the Women’s Farming Cooperative.



Every stroke of this painting resisted me. It seemed to petulantly ask the question, “what’s next?” before I had even begun. I wanted to finish it, but when I stood in front of it, the canvas taller than I was on the easel, it loomed over me and cast a shadow over my brushes. I went to a fellow artist and told him that I wanted to fall in love with this piece. He told me that I should ruin it. Ruin it so I would have to fix it. I went at it with long slashes of red paint, moving frantically until my arm grew tired and my movements became more lugubrious and swirling. From these swirling marks a corn field emerged. Again, I was stymied on the figure, which was too stiff.

The painting was so hard for me because it was not my story to tell. It was supposed to be about the Rwandan genocide, but I am not Rwandan and I was not affected by these events. Still, I knew I felt and still feel a responsibility to help because we are all human. I forced myself through. I painted over and around the painting, but it did not come easily, not ever. I started another canvas, this one about me, about how unmoored I was. The woman in the corn field told me I had a story worth telling. I have a life worth living and recounting. I became reenchanting with painting and myself, propelled forward by the difficulty of bringing the nameless woman onto canvas.

After two months, the painting was nearing

completion. A Rwandan woman walked through a corn field sowing seeds as the sun rose behind her. The sunrays pierced the dark, but there is still a shadow in the sky as the sun was not fully risen. Beneath her, a victim of the 1994 genocide rests in eternal slumber, united with the land and the future of Rwanda by the roots of the corn. I asked our friend in Rwanda, Damien, to give her a name. He named her, “Twaza Mubyeyi” – a mother determined to go ahead despite difficulties, never discouraged. Like a mother, Twaza Mubyeyi helped me grow and looked after me. When I applied to the Masters in Fine Arts at Kansas State University, I got in. Twaza Mubyeyi helped me.

Generosity pays tenfold. In this spirit, please consider buying this painting. 100% of the proceeds will be donated to advance the Woman-operated farming cooperative in Shingiro, Rwanda, and photo evidence will be happily provided. I am asking for \$1,400, a moderate sum in the United States, but one that could change the lives of an entire community in Rwanda. If you are interested, please reach out to me at [arianaswann@ksu.edu](mailto:arianaswann@ksu.edu).

Thank you.

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# Indian Jasmine

RIHAM AZIZ EL-DIN, EGYPT

We return to the same place where we lost something.  
We think we lost a person.  
We keep going to the same place with the hope to find them once more.  
To have a look on their eyes  
To touch their skin  
To smell their sweat.  
We keep going to the same places with the hope to find the love we once lost  
The place is the same  
There is an Indian jasmine flower lying on the flower  
I used to wear the crown of these little flowers on my head  
The white circle of little flowers protecting my long brown hair  
We go back to the places we once left  
We search for the face  
For the love that we once had  
We go back to the places we once left even when they turn to be just a graveyard  
It is time for the little white jasmine to die in peace.  
The places we once left, the faces we once had, the love we once tasted  
Fades away  
The trace of our feet to the graveyard won't turn to make dead alive  
The tears we shed over the tombs won't be heard from the other side  
the nights we spend awakened waiting for the sun to rise so we will find our way home  
the places we once had are not there anymore.  
I stand in front of your grave  
I can still see you  
But couldn't find the face  
I could still feel you  
But couldn't reach for your hand  
I could still smell your skin  
But don't know what to do with all these little jasmine flowers that are hidden in my heart

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# Ontological Enchantment: Rekindling Rootedness in a Ravaged World

RANDALL AMSTER

If you haven't read Octavia Butler's prophetic 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower* yet or in a while, you might want to dial up a copy to help make sense of the moment in which we find ourselves, and perhaps to rekindle a sense of grounded hope in the face of mounting cataclysm. Being engaged participants in this world, it is easy to become overwhelmed by the relentless and escalating sense of crisis and injustice all around us—making it critically important for our work and wellbeing alike to remember that we aren't alone in the struggle and that we're in the flow of history. Without broaching spoilers here, the arc of Butler's visionary story can provide a template for remaining empathetic in troubling times.

The book begins in 2024 and follows the journey of Lauren Olamina, a young African-American woman living in a small community in Southern

California. Lauren has a condition dubbed "hyperempathy" in which she feels (and sometimes physically manifests) what others nearby are feeling—mostly pain. Outside of her enclave, the world is spiraling out of control, plagued by violence and poverty and social decay in a manner that is a credible extrapolation of the world today. As the façade of security crumbles around her, Lauren develops a philosophy known as Earthseed and embarks on a perilous journey with a band of travelers to find a place where they can plant seeds for a better world in the midst of despair.

his is all within the book jacket blurb, so I'm not really giving anything away! What I'd like to offer, instead, is a glimpse of Earthseed and how it connects with a range of other contemporary perspectives on coping with the existential threats of climate change, environmental degradation,

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militarism and militarization, profound inequality, and structural violence infused throughout sociopolitical systems. The epistemology of diagnosing these issues is one thing; ontologically acting despite them is another.

In Butler's vision, these forces have converged in tangible ways, being interconnected manifestations of common root causes that have served to separate us from one another and collectively from the living world. The conversion of common resources to private hands, the theft of lands and exploitation of labor en masse, the folly of building fortress societies and pursuing security as a zero-sum proposition, the individualization of hardships and harms, a prevailing ethos of powerlessness grounded in complacency and complicity, propaganda promulgated by official entities—all of these are contemplated by the book in ways that suggest how they are part of a larger unraveling of connection.

In the face of this, Earthseed is a nascent philosophy of change, adaptation, open-endedness, and hope. It isn't a palliative or pie-in-the-sky exercise, however; as Olamina/Butler writes, "There is no end to what a living world will demand of you." Earthseed begins with the humility of acknowledging "that it knows nothing" and cautions that we must "embrace diversity or be destroyed." The locus of change is cast as eternal and fundamental in the book, with the foundational mantra that "God is

change," but the onus of action is on us: "We must find the rest of what we need within ourselves, in one another." In this light, Earthseed is an active faith, issuing a call to cultivate equal parts helpfulness and hopefulness.

In a tangible sense, the development of societies based on these ideals has a familiar ring to it from the annals of intentional communities and other experiments in collective, connected living (indeed, there's even an inspiring actual Earthseed Land Collective in North Carolina): arable land to grow food, a stable water supply, renewable sources of energy, an educational mission, an ethic of care, sharing the work and the fruits of those efforts, a sense of purpose and commitment, a place of sanctuary that engages with (but doesn't necessarily try to "fix") the world, a space for collective imagining that is built on "good ground" (from the eponymous biblical parable) so that our mutual roots may reach to the stars.

There's more to say about all of this, of course, but you should (re)read the book (as well as its 1999 sequel, *Parable of the Talents*). The overarching insistence on simultaneously getting back to ground and looking up in wonder reminds me of sentiments expressed in some of the chapters in the edited volume *All We Can Save* (subtitled "Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis"). In an essay entitled "Loving in a Vanishing World,"



Courtesy of Soul Fire Farm, an Afro-Indigenous Centered Education Farm Non Profit

Emily N. Johnston divulges being “entranced by the beauty of this world” despite the ravages of decades of extractivism and mass consumer culture. This moment presents to us “an astonishingly beautiful gift,” Johnston writes, namely the opportunity to be part of the process needed for life to survive, revealing “the seed of life and possibility that we share with all of Earth’s life.” The call is to love this “vanishing world,” to “rejoin the web of life,” and ultimately (and urgently) to “get to the beautiful work of making space for a decent future” in a time when “our last best chance is now.”

Likewise, in her essay “Home Is Always Worth It,” Mary Annaïse Heglar critiques the penchant within the climate movement for sometimes lapsing into either doomerism or an insistence on “hope everlasting” that feels unrealistic. “We don’t have to

be Pollyanna-ish or fatalistic,” Heglar opines, but instead can embrace the “messy, imperfect, contradictory, broken” qualities of ourselves and the world, facing our struggles with a sense of courage that “leads to action” and that lays a foundation for active hope. This perspective urges us to pick up what we can and “make a world out of it” without knowing the ending. This sense of ambiguity, or at least of unfinished business, is an important component of change being taken seriously as an ongoing concept; indeed, many social movements recognize that the work is never done, that the struggle continues, and that the arc of justice is very long. We can help be architects of a new world—or better yet, cultivators of new ground—by having empathy for ourselves in the process.



Courtesy of author

Numerous details about the who and where and how of all of this need to be explicated, but the starting point (as the characters in Butler’s novel discerned) is to take those first tenuous steps of possibility in the face of ostensible unraveling. It is believing in something, coupled with capacities to make it become viable, that keeps the vision from becoming unattainable and detached, and that allows it to infuse the hard work of reengagement, remediation, and rebuilding that lies ahead if we are to have a future together. As the activist adage goes:

“They tried to bury us, but they didn’t know we were seeds.” The world may seem as if it is burying us under the weight of catastrophes in every direction and at all scales, yet it remains incumbent upon us to gather and sow the seeds of change from these crises. May our enchantment with the world spur us collectively toward taking root and flourishing into the future.

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# Unfinished Thoughts On Mourning and Melancholia

AFRITI BANKWALLA

I think my sighs—surprisingly high and short but trailing, not abrupt—  
I think they sound like those of my dog  
Whose upturned eyes reflect his perpetual state of forlornness.  
I, like my dog, am somewhat of a chronic melancholic.  
I mourn everything, I think.  
I don't know why but I mourn friendships from kindergarten  
Even though they slipped away from me as easily and naturally as an odor dissipating into the ether.  
And I mourn the friendships that are still present in my orbit,  
Mourn the way they used to be, sure, but  
Also the way they...could be?  
What I mean to get at is this feeling I have that  
Mourning and melancholia for me aren't tied up so much in nostalgia as  
They are rooted in desire.

I was once asked to respond to the question,  
“How do we keep moving?”  
But these days I think I'm more interested in figuring out  
How to keep standing still.  
What happens when we stop for a while?  
Jackie said, “when we stop we regress!”  
But I think there must be a way of stopping that's more like treading water:  
We're staying in the same place but keeping up the work of sustaining ourselves  
And growing stronger.  
The line between what you need to do to survive and

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The way survival fucking kills you  
I think is thin as the worn away, frayed patches on my childhood teddy bear,  
And I am desperate to figure out how we can remain  
And loiter and dawdle and just fucking  
Exist without racing towards our own unraveling.  
Because I want to get tangled up with everything and  
I want to hold on to and keep holding onto  
Everything that evades my touch.  
What I mean is that I want to collect everything,  
But I'm not interested in having things.  
I want to plaster onto myself the feeling of noticing  
I want to keep close to me  
The way a particular ray of light looked as it hit the wall behind her bed  
Three years ago  
And I want to drape myself in what it felt like  
To have had that ray of light catch my eye  
In that moment, in that stage of my life.

So when I talk about mourning things,  
I'm talking about mourning these things:  
All the books I've never read and all the springtimes I've missed in places I used to live,  
All the songs I've never connected with but seen others groove to,  
All the fleeting thoughts that I just can't remember anymore and the ones I remember but just don't  
hit the same in hindsight,  
All the projects I haven't yet finished.  
But I'm not mourning them because I associate the unfinished with death  
But, rather, because I want to keep not finishing them.  
Mourning as artistic practice.  
Mourning as process.  
Mourning as staying with.  
I'm talking about longing for all the poems I've left (un)written and  
I'm talking about wanting to linger in the feeling of not knowing the right words,  
  
Of clicking my mouse over the three xs I use as a place filler in my documents.

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# Allow me to return home and get more love, care, and support when I'm bleeding

YOUTH ESSAY AND SHORT STORY CONTEST  
HONORABLE MENTION  
JUHI ADHIKARI, 20, KATHMANDU, NEPAL

*An honorable mention is not based on total score, rather it is a nomination from a particular judge because it moved them in a special way. Meena Chen nominated this piece.*

"Please allow me to return home; I'm scared to go to sleep with the cattle nearby. It's just that I'm going through a normal procedure called menstruation. Said 14-year-old Fulmaya Tamang to her father, "Don't treat it unclean, I don't deserve this....."

The menstruation taboo is a social stigma that considers women and girls as unclean or impure

during their periods. In Nepal, especially in the far-western and Himalayan regions, this taboo is called *Chhaupadi*. *Chhaupadi* means that women and girls have to sleep in isolated huts or sheds outside their homes during menstruation. They are also forbidden from touching other people, animals, plants, water sources, or religious icons. his practice exposes them to many health and safety risks, such

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PC: Problem Image, Fulmaya Tamang (Name Changed), 14 years, Female, Nepal

as infections, snake bites, cold weather, sexual assault, or even death. There are many efforts to end Chhaupadi and promote menstrual health and hygiene in Nepal. The government has banned Chhaupadi since 2005 and made it a criminal offense since 2017. Many NGOs and activists are also working to raise awareness, educate communities, distribute sanitary pads, and challenge cultural norms. However, there are still many challenges and barriers to overcoming this deeply rooted tradition.

Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) is a participatory arts-based research project which allows youths in Nepal, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, and Rwanda to

explore the social issue and advocate for policy changes to solve the problems. In Nepal, as part of a research project, a group of teenage girls went to several schools and facilitated sessions with other teenage girls participants to have space to share their perspectives and understand the social issues they are facing. Many teenage girls raised the issue of untouchability as a big concern and stress for them and they want to solve this social problem.

In the above drawing, I demonstrated the reflection from one of the youth discussion sessions on how menstruation is still stigmatized in the western region of the country. People of this region are seen to be very strict regarding their culture which

cannot be challenged. This custom is known as "Chaupadi". Due to the cultural stigma attached to being "impure," during menstruation and soon after childbirth, females are required to live away from home in a cramped, dangerous shed. As a young child who doesn't even know how to take care of her personal hygiene, and has blood stains all over her skirt and rashes over her thighs, Fulmaya Tamang is seen in this photo sobbing and pleading with her father to let her return home.

She considers it unreasonable that she had to stay out of school during menstruation, sleeps in a shed, and suffer a lot simply because she was a girl and bleeding. Her mother, Puspa Lata Tamang, also feels helpless as she recalls how challenging it was for her to conceive Fulmaya in a cowshed and how she was forced to stay there with her newborn child for 11 days. She recalls the misery of being deprived of nourishing food and warm clothing to cover her daughter. She feels that Fulmaya had no option but to practice as she looks at her daughter with a broken heart.

Her father, Dil Bahadur Tamang, held the belief that a girl or woman's body is possessed by an evil spirit during menstruation and that this is why they should be kept away from the house and shouldn't be fed nutritious food because doing so, according to their society, would strengthen the evil within them. The crops Fulmaya touches would all die if

she were allowed to walk around at this time, and she would poison every man she came into contact with. Even though he knew in his heart that this was wrong, he couldn't go against the long-standing custom and asked his daughter to follow it instead. Fulmaya is now forced to live alone because their community mindlessly follows this habit.

She is now kept in isolation and she now has been deprived of good quality food, sanitary conditions, independence, humanity, and dignity. While every female bleed during her period, it is hardly ever positively recognized in the far western part of Nepal, despite being a natural process.

"I used to assume that Chaupadi was an obligation, but after the awareness education campaign addressing menstruation, bodily autonomy, sex education, cleanliness, and sanitation in the programs and awareness campaign in the village for the youths, I learned that it wasn't," stated Fulmaya Tamang.

As part of the discussion, we did not only talk about the social problems, we also explored the possible solutions from the teenage girls' perspective. This second picture depicts the female voice and how they visualize the solution to make the world a better place to live for us girls as well.



PC: Solution Image, Fulmaya (Name Changed), 14 years, Female, Nepal

While a woman is menstruating, she may still live happily with her family in their home, as shown by the dark red blood drop in the background and the house inside it. This demonstrates that girls may live at home, receive extra care from their families, and consume nutritious food. The fact that the father and mother are wearing the same shade of clothing highlights their solidarity in supporting their daughter even while she is menstruating and the shift in social attitudes that are taking place.

Dil Bahadur Tamang moved forward for the shift while holding hands with his wife and his daughter. This illustrates how men and women may work together to transform society in ways that are advantageous to both genders. Fulmaya and every other girl/woman like her in their society

experienced embarrassment when menstruated and believed they'll be treated cruelly and sent to a cowshed both during and after childbirth, while they were both experiencing these natural bodily processes.

Thus, it is very important to leave no one behind and ensure we girls also have opportunities for thriving in our careers without any hindrances. The untouchability practice during the menstruation cycle is not only discriminatory but also a very stressful and mentally disturbing phase for millions of girls in Nepal. Without embracing the natural bodily process gracefully, our girls will not have a better place to live.

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# Awakened

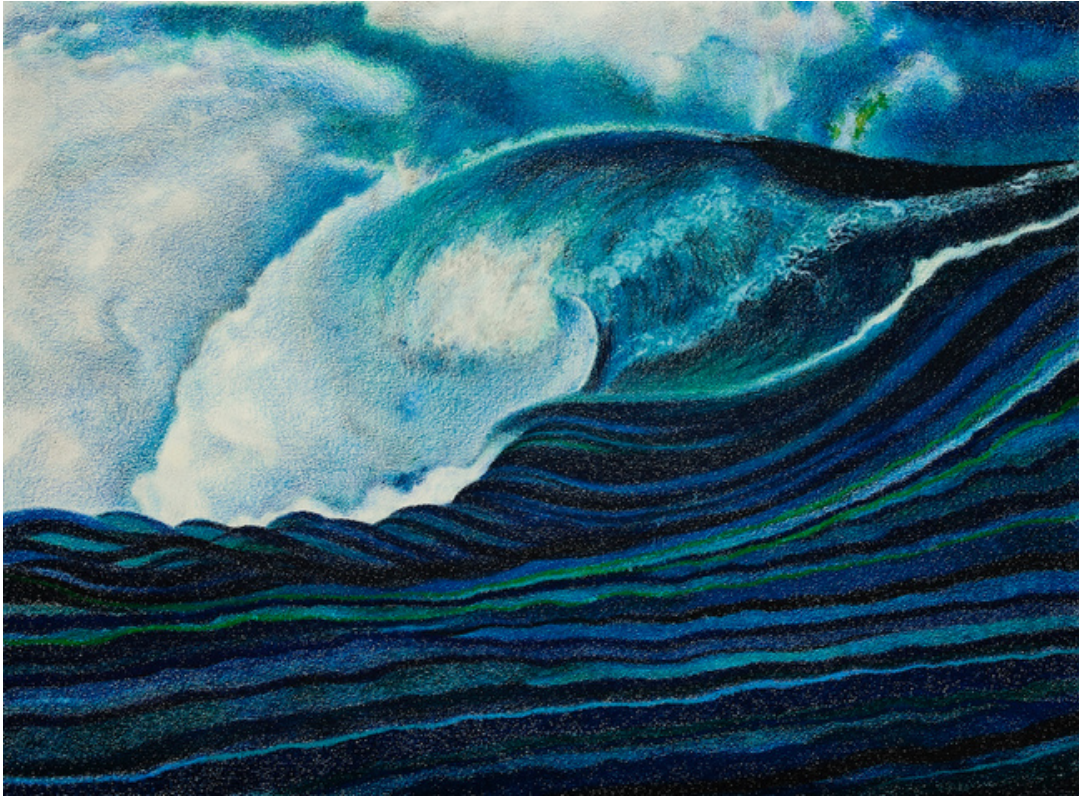
DANIEL RUDOLPH

Awakened by the effulgence of dawn. Feeling as fresh as the taste of yesterday still lingering in your mouth and caked on your teeth. Mind crashing like the ocean you're looking into. The discomfort of the sand all over you has entered your mind.

You rise up out of the sand and realign yourself with the wind. As you pace through the sand you feel the unevenness of each stride. Each feeling similar but wholly distinct. The sand is now dampened from when the tide was high. Your feet submerge deep into the wet ground with every step, you gain a sense of control. The white of the water simmers and meets your feet. It is a happy reunion. With each pace a different part of your body feels the embrace of the cold water. Slowly it is up to your neck, leaving your head alone in the hot sun.

The immediate past seems so far away. It is a new sun, a new day. You plunge your head in the water and relinquish your ability to breathe. The initial sense of desperation dissipates into joy. Out of necessity you ascend into the warmth of the loving compassion. You ascend into the warmth of the sun.

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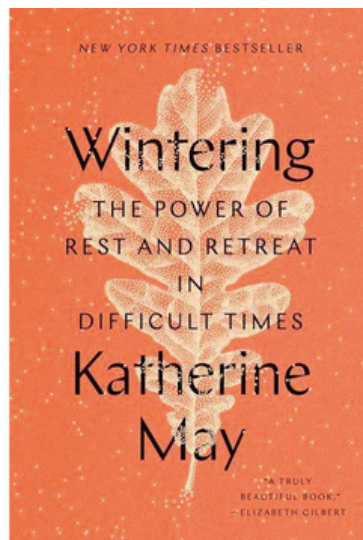


*Rise of the Wave*, Lenoard Cicio  
Work for sale

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# The Wellsprings of Rest

ROSANNAH GOSSER



Work by nine, then off past five  
 And they work my nerves  
 That's why I cannot sleep at night.  
 ... I'm takin' my new salvation  
 And I'ma build my own foundation.  
 – Beyoncé, “BREAK MY SOUL”, Renaissance

Beyoncé's bold rhetoric in her 2022 hit single points toward a growing recognition of the toxicity of overwork culture, which glorifies working harder, faster, and longer in pursuit of one's economic growth. As hollow as these claims might seem for one of the richest singers in the world, such conversations support the society-wide need to

reclaim a sense of contentment, ease, and personal integrity, particularly in a climate of rising costs of living, longer work hours, and stagnant wages. Two recent books propose the importance of rest in addressing the woes of overwork culture:

*Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times* (2020) by Katherine May and *Rest Is Resistance: A Manifesto* (2022) by Tricia Hersey. Taken together, these two books invoke the capacity of rest for remaking, repairing, and re-enchancing our lives within contemporary late-stage capitalism, guiding us away from the harmful beliefs and behaviors encouraged by overwork

culture and towards more balanced, peaceful, and empowered ways of life.

Wintering and Rest Is Resistance are about more than simply urging us to get enough sleep or make more time for leisure – advice that most would agree is easier said than done in today’s busy world. Rather, May and Hersey trouble mainstream perceptions around rest that they argue are rooted in a profound alienation from our most vital, natural processes. Such ideas are evoked by the term ‘downtime’ itself, which suggests that rest is something to be sidelined or that humans function like machines. May and Hersey dismiss both of these ideas, and by doing so, they pull qualities like productivity and presentability – long-vaunted as ideals in society – down off their pedestals.

As hybrid memoirs, both books also source the authors’ personal experiences in an effort to underscore the value and necessity of rest in our lives. Between these shared approaches, May and Hersey address differently the exhaustion, burnout, and disillusionment that so many people increasingly describe as routine. While May roots these issues as part of a larger crisis of relating to the world around us, Hersey examines the structural-cum-historic factors governing our time, energy, and well-being, particularly for those in marginalized communities. By considering both of these approaches, I argue, we might learn to regard

restfulness in terms of its often overlooked reserves, so long as we tread with care, respect, and curiosity.

British author Katherine May discusses how she learned to appreciate the unsung powers of rest the hard way – she had set out to write a very different book than *Wintering*, but “in the process, life happened” (135). Her husband fell ill during her fortieth birthday celebrations, she in turn confronted a chronic illness and left her job, and her son struggled to cope in school. Through a series of essays, the reader accompanies May on her journey of self-transformation as she grapples with the inevitable realities of life’s unfolding, ones she embeds both literally and metaphorically into nature’s changing seasons. Rest figures for May as a crucial component of winter, wherein the natural world hunkers down to survive until spring. In working to recuperate our relationship with the natural cycle of winter, she argues, we also begin the process of healing our relationship with the natural cycles in our lives.

*Wintering’s* publication in February 2020 certainly presents a measure of prescience in the emergent global crisis that would force billions of people to face the realities of loss, lockdown, and how to deal with life destabilized. Her book emphasizes that hardships will happen to us by virtue of being alive – but rather than deferring to states of numbness or indignation, our power lies in our adaptability and response. Significantly, she says this metamorphic



potential is best attuned to through rest and retreat, and that we might learn from life's patterns reflected in the phases of deciduous trees, hibernating animals, and human cultural traditions more connected with the earth's rhythms.

From the beginning, May's passages on the deeper meanings of seasonality deploy the word "winter" effectively in its verb form: "[e]verybody winters at one time or another" (13), she explains, and, by the end, "the time had come" to pass the lessons she had learned from her own wintering on to her son (71). May makes clear that emotional and physical survival in tough times can be messy, yet each time we engage mindfully with life's challenges, we perform "a kind of alchemy" that opens a door for greater wisdom and insight, which is then our responsibility to share with others (14, 136). Her moving reflections remind us of the essential place of rest in these processes, as well as the beauty, enchantment, and sense of belonging that can coexist with our winters when we take the time to appreciate the wonders of nature and the simple joys in our lives – a theme she explores further in her new book, *Enchantment: Awakening Wonder in an Anxious Age* (2023).

Tricia Hersey's declaration, *Rest Is Resistance*, likewise centers rest as a threshold for regenerative change. A multidisciplinary artist, scholar, teacher, and founder of the U.S.-based organization, The

Nap Ministry, Hersey presents rest as a critical tool in justice work, racial reparations, and mending the traumas of overwork – or 'grind' – culture, which she contends has people at all levels of society worn out and disconnected. Her book considers grind culture in terms of its direct links to the history of slave plantations – as the cradles of today's capitalism – and she argues that her commitment to rest mobilizes an end to this historical continuity. "I don't belong to the systems," Hersey writes, explaining her refusal to forfeit her body to a system that sees it solely as "a tool for its production" (25). Instead, Hersey upholds the body as a site of liberation, where rest is paramount for strengthening the ability to tap into our body's full potential.

Rest is a portal, Hersey urges; it is a safe place away from the cruelties, violence, and distractions of the world, and we must "go there often", for this is where an important source of our collective liberation lies (63-64). On the other hand, Hersey stresses that this concept of rest is not something found at expensive retreats, scrolling through social media, or by binge-watching Netflix. Resting is at once a "meticulous love practice" and a subversive strategy. It means slowing down enough to connect the mind, body, and spirit, as it requires resisting the market's ever-conniving tactics to keep us dissatisfied and consuming. Resting can be as straightforward as Hersey's grandmother's

commitment to sitting on the couch every evening for thirty minutes with her eyes closed, and it can be as inexpensive as daydreaming, taking a bath, or watching the clouds pass (11, 12). This concept of rest, Hersey argues, not only brings greater personal peace, but it deliberately disrupts the oppressive systems that depend on our restlessness, recuperating our focus instead toward dreaming up new ones.

*Rest Is Resistance* tells Hersey's personal story of her redirection away from grind culture and into creating the manifesto's framework – as a Black, queer woman juggling motherhood, graduate school, multiple jobs, and debt. Growing up in a deeply devout family, she learned from a young age the ways in which radical faith inspires Black autonomy and self-determination; similarly, she reflects these teachings in the homiletic style of her writing, using repetition and poetic syntax to make her points clear. In 2016, Hersey launched The Nap Ministry, which grounds her work's objectives in collective napping events and community somatics practices. Her ideas and various platforms draw deep inspiration from those who carved new ways of thinking and being out of seemingly impossible conditions: her Ancestors, American anti-slavery maroons and fugitives, and Black liberation theologians, artists, and intellectuals. For Hersey, these forebears offer a body of evidence for how to navigate a world of unknowns in hope of a better

future.

Within Hersey's robust proposal on the importance of critical thought, imagination, and mindfulness in working to effect lasting societal change, hope in the midst of uncertainty motivates *Rest Is Resistance*. In other words, Hersey admits that she lacks all of the answers about what comes next for society – a wariness she's certainly not alone in feeling. What steps can we take to enact thorough structural change in a time when the systems' dominance seems to grip so tightly? How might we realize genuine equality with such mass disparities in wealth, health, access, and circumstance? And what does the struggle for human justice mean with the existence of the Earth itself threatened?

Hersey's engagement with questions like these resonates with May's conclusion that often the "best response" in challenging times "is the honest one" (May 135). Yet at this critical juncture between hope and uncertainty is something that neither Hersey nor May doubts has the capacity to help us be fully alive and human in the world. By centering restfulness in our lives, we commit to the regeneration of time, space, and energy that is integral to resisting helplessness, and we protect the actual psychological need for fallow time that generations of humans before us sourced for creativity, invention, and connection with the greater world. With rest, we regain our ability to fall

back in love with life, and we deepen our resilience that every day is needed to steward the present, reflect on the past, and prepare for the future.

As I read each book, what stood out to me was how constructive I thought a dialogue between Hersey and May might be. There are points on which the two would clearly disagree; for instance, May confides to the reader what “an unfathomable luxury” it is to slow down and savor her mid-winter serenity, as she worries she might be “enjoying it a little too much” (25). But for Hersey, the belief that rest is a privilege is one of the hallmark myths perpetuated by grind culture. Our bodily autonomy, she reassures, provides the evidence for our right to rest, regardless of how the system teaches us that we must earn it through work (25). Rest is a basic need for survival, and so it also does not depend on one’s social standing. Moreover, Hersey leans on the teachings of Black liberation theology to maintain that our right to rest is supported by our innate divinity as human beings, arguing that we begin to grasp this understanding through uplifting practices of love and connection in our lives.

*Wintering*, alternatively, offers a candid glimpse into such a process. With a sense of humor, May explores her feelings of shame that arise from both eschewing the pressure to be productive while seeking a more rested, spiritual lifestyle. Her essays

address a particularly British discomfort with these types of behaviors, and as she takes up rituals like meditation and solstice celebrations, she confesses her fear that these changes are “simply cringeworthy” in a culture where the presumption of reason and propriety reigns (66). Self-consciousness aside, May argues that the pursuit of deeper meaning in modern life “expresses a craving” that many experience but might lack a way to articulate (67). And, politically motivated or not, May echoes Hersey’s reminders that the task of unraveling our collective social conditioning around rest will “not be easy”, but it is high time we re-evaluate work as our metric of success (Hersey 11, 117).

Both share the conclusion that community support helps to foster environments where we can move through vulnerability, grief, and fear as we begin to prioritize a genuine sense of integrity in our lives. May compares these relationships to “congregations”, composed of “all kinds of people” and “unexpected perspectives”, yet places where we can stick together and flourish (119). Hersey states that it is the sense of belonging established through “radical community care” which secures our liberation from oppressive systems and safeguards our personal rest practices (126). Their final assertions here give the impression that the potential of community togetherness has, like rest, still much to reveal.

What neither book directly addresses is how rest might figure for those in our greater communities who hold more responsibility for the collective's well-being. To be sure, there are risks associated with promoting rest as a solution – political or otherwise – particularly in a time when the most powerful and wealthy among us fail to act, make excuses, or rely on glacial and even defunct processes to make decisions that affect others. What Hersey and May do effectively suggest to this end, though, is that uplifting restfulness as a human imperative might bring the kind of self-awareness, mindfulness, honesty, and humility that all figures of authority need. Jacinda Ardern's 2023 resignation as New Zealand's prime minister positively represents what such a leadership style can normalize. In turn, a collective shift away from overwork culture and towards more balanced lifestyles makes possible a greater degree of participation, accountability, and authorship within this world.

With such a shift in mind, I like to think of rest in terms of what Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe calls the "reservoirs of life" (181). According to Mbembe, the world's duration turns on humankind's capacity to rejuvenate "the beings and things that seem lifeless". And it is through those sources that Mbembe says we must remake "the desire for life" as the foundation of a new kind of politics and cultures. Read within the context of l

ate-stage capitalism, Mbembe's proposal not only implies the potential existential consequences linked to our cultural obsession with productivity, but he also signals the transformative potential located within such supposedly lifeless ways of being as our resting states. Hersey and May set about this work of regenerative re-enchantment, unearthing overlooked wellsprings of power within some of the most ordinary of our days' cadences. They ask: what capacities for remaking the world lie dormant beneath disillusionment and exhaustion? Well-rested, what might gain our attention? What might we begin to repair?

### References

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# Returning

MEENA CHEN



This is a story about an emotional journey viewed from right to left, something I tend to illustrate in many of my more linear narratives and comics. The first panel on the very right depicts hopelessness and the deals that we make with certain demons in order to make it through desperate times and to survive in a violent, capitalist and colonialist world. It continues to reveal the burden of that deal, and carrying the weight of that demon on one's shoulders. Finally, one can use the knowledge and experience of harm to grow and choose to heal with non-violence, and use the powers developed from having those demons to become stronger and heal. I like to use this method of telling real-life stories in a fantasy setting, because it makes the visuals more

epic, interesting, and visually pleasing. It also brings out the magic of the journey, by giving a physical form to our demons, weapons, and magical powers.

Medium: Sharpie on Cardboard

Price: \$888

Check out my Instagram: @meenartsy!

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# Potato Leaf

YOUTH POETRY CONTEST HONORABLE  
MENTION  
NOLAN MENG, 9, CALIFORNIA, USA

*An honorable mention is not based on total score, rather it is a nomination from a particular judge. Afriti Bankwalla nominated Potato Leaf.*

Little ant little ant goes to find food

He heard the thump of a leaf which meant there was food

He followed the sweet smell of the leaf

found a big green round potato leaf

He tasted it and it tasted plain

Suddenly it started to rain

The rain fell off the leaf like raining on a slope

He fed the wet and soaked

leaf to the queen.

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Breathing in, I smile.  
Breathing out, I release.



Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment.  
Breathing out, I feel it is a wonderful moment.

Thich Naht Hanh