

**Miracle Workers Collective** 

### GREATER

**Archive Books** 



## **DERCEPTION**





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Partecipazioni Nazionali

# **GREATER MIRACLE**

**Miracle Workers Collective** 

## **bebcedica**

#### A GREATER MIRACLE OF PERCEPTION CURATORIAL STATEMENT

#### GIOVANNA ESPOSITO YUSSIF CHRISTOPHER WESSELS BONAVENTURE SOH BEJENG NDIKUNG

15-24	<b>Trespassing: A Psychosomatic In(ter)ference</b> Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung
25-27	<b>Black Girl on the Bus Home</b> Christopher L. Thomas
29-31	<b>Future Poet</b> Sonya Lindfors & Leena Pukki
33-43	Excerpt from <i>The Drowning Game</i> A Refugee in the Paradise That Is Europe Hassan Blasim
44-50	<b>Patterns to Break</b> Lorenzo Sandoval
51-57	<b>Working Out Work</b> Martta Tuomaala
59-63	<b>We Should All Be Dreaming Vol. 3</b> Maryan Abdulkarim & Sonya Lindfors
64-77	<b>A Picture of Us</b> Suvi West

CONTENTS

- 79–92 The Legacy of Ládjogahpir Eeva-Kristiina Harlin & Outi Pieski
- 93-97 Xararge Maryan Abdulkarim & Khadar Ahmed
- 99-113 Excerpt from Juolgevuođđu (Sole) Niillas Holmberg
- 115–128 Ellos Deatnu! Long Live the River Deatnu! Aslak Holmberg
- **129–138 Frequently Unsolved Questions** David Muñoz-Alcántara
- **139-155 Speculative Ontology** Asher Gamedze

BIOGRAPHIES COLOPHON

A GREATER MIRACLE OF PERCEPTION CURATORIAL STATEMENT

GIOVANNA ESPOSITO YUSSIF CHRISTOPHER WESSELS BONAVENTURE SOH BEJENG NDIKUNG

"It demands great spiritual resilience not to hate the hater whose foot is on your neck, and an even greater miracle of perception and charity not to teach your child to hate." "Yeah there is a message in all of my music. It's all about people doing something else other than what they have done, because what they have done is the possible and the way the world is today is the result of the possible that they did, it's the result of the absolute thing. So now, there is something else. There's always something else in a Universe as big as this."

> –Sun Ra, interview with Musiikkiykkönen [Music One], YLE – The Finnish Broadcasting Company, October 24, 1971.

Miracles and miracle-making are manifestations of the impossible – not because the impossible is impossible, but because the impossible is thought of as such by those that exist in – or accept the normalcy of – that which is framed as the possible. As for bra Lee 'Scratch' Perry, who once said "I'm a miracle man, things happen which I don't plan, I've never planned anything. Whatsoever I do, I want it to be an instant action object, instant reaction subject. Instant input, instant output," the concept of the impossible seems to be rather seems to be the rule, not the exception.

> Miracles are thus the performativity of all those concepts that have been prefixed with 'im-', 'in-', 'un-' or otherwise imply the contrary, the opposite, the negative of, as in impossible, invisible, inaccessible, unbelievable, unacceptable, unrecoverable. But once the miracle is performed, that is to say once the prefix is obliterated, the impossible takes form. Beyond these lines, one can understand the greater miracle of perception as braving what has been normalised, as challenging the frames of perception and the rationale of knowing. It requires a teleological suspension and epistemic disobedience to entail reparation of the bonds between our cognition and the plurality of knowledges and literacies through which they manifest. As such, it expands what can be perceived, experienced, done, and imagined.

*Miraculum* is the Latin word for "an object of wonder." *Mirari* is "to wonder at, marvel, be astonished," and figuratively it means "to regard, esteem." The astonishment and marvel that a young man could heal by making a blind see, or take control of the norms of nature by walking on water, or perform a social act like sharing a loaf of bread and a fish with thousands of people. For, indeed, miracle making is the act of losing one's innocence, of seeing that what was and is not meant to be seen, or being cognisant of what is not meant to be understood. So maybe the miracle is not really the act of making the blind man see, but making the onlookers see and believe that the act of healing the blind is possible.

> If people have been engaging with the possible "and the way the world is today is the result of the possible that they did," then what would be the results of imagining and engaging with the impossible?

> > -Miracle Workers Collective

For our proposal A Greater Miracle of Perception, we will concern ourselves less with the product of the miracle, but rather cogitate the process of miracle making by engaging with its performativity and processes, as well as with the agency – the capacity to act, and the exercise or manifestation of this capacity – that precedes and accompanies the performative act.

> The Miracle Workers Collective (MWC) is formed and informed by a transdisciplinary and anational community, sharing and developing an ecology of practices within the framework of the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia. The MWC will explore the phenomenology of the miracle through a critical engagement with collective practices. For this, we call on Esiaba Irobi's reflections in *The Philosophy of the Sea* where he refers to phenomenology "as a trope of spiritual and political resistance" and "as an act of community and a tool for social, spiritual, and political engineering of diverse peoples of the world." Noting that it "is best understood [...]

through the experiential, physical dimension of embodied performance" where the body itself "functions as a somatogenic instrument as well as a site of multiple discourses which absorbs and replays, like music recorded on vinyl, epistemologies of faith and power grooved into it by history."

It is crucial to underline that in order to grasp the engineering and machinery behind the performing and performance of miracles and how these impact societies, their cultures and politics, one must address how the miraculous has been plundered. Sedimenting the knowledges of miracle making and turning them into dominant discourses or ideologies to maintain and justify the privilege of a few has been a common practice in instrumentalising the extraordinary. It serves toward the construction and preservation of the 'exception' and the 'ruled.' Capitalist and colonial systems and practices have feasted on the 'miracles' of transmutation - through the transformation of bodies and land into the resources that feed the exception - with the aim to make believe that their realisation is both miraculous and an act of what is possible, while the realisation of what they label as others belongs to the realm of the impossible.

> The word miracle has also been attached to processes of economic recovery and growth to forms of sociopolitical organisation, that subtract from their narrative the implications for those processes to manifest. Such is the case of the Nordic model of the welfare state, a result of strong social organisation and collective bargaining, or more recently the Finnish education reforms. Both have been widely mythologised, creating such big shadows that makes it difficult to understand how they came to be and how they are currently being shattered by strong neoliberal and corporatocratic policies.

Education and the welfare state as miracles. Knowledge as miracle. Having the privilege to belong to them is like transforming water to wine. The miracle of privilege.

Now, the question at stake is how can the epistemics and performativity of miracles be explored through the physicality of an exhibition and embodied experientiality of the people. If miracles are embodied spiritual, natural, philosophical, and abstract phenomena, then they are expressed in the forms of "proverbs, oral poetry, rap, incantation, storytelling, dance, theatre, festival, ritual, the plastic arts [...] these concepts become manifest as transcendental phenomenology in action – to both initiates and outsiders," as Irobi explains. Our aim is to explore a wide understanding of what miracles can be, ranging from the ability of making wonders to the etymological Sanskrit root *smerah* or, Greek root *meidan*, which means to smile.

By unpacking miracle making through the poetics of iterations and collective thinking, and accentuating the cinematic as method for exploring miracles or the impossible, the objective is not only the realisation of a film but the exploration of a broader ecosystem or community that blossoms around this process - since the production of cinema in its essence is a collaborative exercise. According to Lewis Gordon, reasonability can embrace contradictions; in fact, he argues that it must do so in order to evaluate itself, and this leads to his conclusion that "the scope of reason exceeds rationality." We know that in the production of cinema the 'disciplines' that collaborate are in constant conversation and constant consideration, but we also know that this considered relationality is governed by deeply entrenched hierarchies and responsibilities.

So at its core, the act of disciplinary disobedience is the fracturing and dissolution of hierarchy and the exploration of the potentiality of a constant conversation and consideration without it. Thus, to sincerely realise a *reason* that exceeds *rationality*, it is imperative to venture into the realm of the conception and realisation of miracles through the ensemble of the collective. Through the proposed expanded exhibiting practice, rethinking *being* becomes foundational in the realisation of the *impossible*.

The actions and work of the MWC are partly a contestation of hierarchical structures manifesting as an ontological within the production of cinema and exhibition-making in biennale contexts. It is about developing ways of contesting the everyday using the spaces of exhibition-making to explore those (im)possibilities. How does the process of (re)creating miracles in cinema help to nurturing ways of contestation? How does one rehearse dismantling impossibility through artistic practices? And how does this help in the dismantling of other impossibilities in the everyday?

> The Greater Miracle of Perception is organized through the analogy of a living organism. The Alvar Aalto Pavilion features a site-specific installation Ovdavázzit – Forewalkers by Outi Pieski, that enunciates the complex internationalist dimension concerning the Sámi people's collective struggle against enclosures, and The Killing of Čáhcerávga, a collective film by Maryan Abdulkarim, Khadar Ahmed, Hassan Blasim, Sonya Lindfors, Leena Pukki, Martta Tuomaala, Christopher L. Thomas, and Suvi West, that dives into the miraculous to explore its experiential poetics. The modular set Movable Membrane by Lorenzo Sandoval functions as a place for osmosis and encounters.

These collective narratives propose a dignified status for nature and people based on reciprocity and respect.

The exhibition expands through a series of iterations (taking place in Berlin, Venice, Kárášjohka, and Helsinki during 2019) and this publication. They are conceived as interdependent parallel readings, mechanism of displacement into other temporalities and geographies, and unfoldments that broaden our thinking about collectivity. As platforms, they present diverse practices where notions of transmutation, divination, and healing become processes of rematriation, restoration, and joy.

> Giovanna Esposito Yussif, Christopher Wessels, and Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

### TRESPASSING: A PSYCHOSOMATIC IN(TER)FERENCE

Forgive us our trespasses. And forgive those who trespass against us.

With this in mind, the act of trespassing became at once the highest of sins one could ever commit, and at the same time the most profound form of rebellion one could possibly enact. We went to secondary school – boarding school – when we were eleven years of age. Often drilled enough to skip one or two classes in primary school in order not to be late in the race of life. Now with the benefits of hindsight, I ask myself why the rush? Where to and for whom? We shouldn't be lagging behind while our peers were making history, so thought our parents.

So, at eleven you left your brothers and sisters, your parents and friends, and were bound to spend the next seven years of secondary and high school in dormitories and classes, on sports fields, and manual labour grounds, and most especially between them. These inbetween spaces were and are crucial; while your class or dorm were the places of sojourn, the in-between space – mostly well kept lawns with hedges and tidied lanes, which were perfect mimicries of the colonial imaginary – were neither meant to be trespassed nor spaces of loitering. But as we so well knew from our arithmetics and mathematics classes, the shortest distance of any triangle was the hypothenuse. Thus we loved the hypothenuse.

Five to seven years before that, we were conditioned to recite the Lord's prayer in chorus in Sunday school of catechism. Every word of the Lord's prayer carried its weight in gold. Every word sat in its place and existed within and beyond the realm of metaphors. "Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." With this, trespassing of any kind, even outside of the the Church, became associated and interpretable within the contexts of earth and heaven, temptation and evil. So, one's existence was framed by the notion of trespassing.

But we may as well rewind a few years earlier. Being born in Cameroon of parents from the so-called Anglophone minority, one was always given the impression that one was trespassing in one's own country.

In what was to become a two federal state country after the reunification of West Cameroon and East Cameroon in 1961, the Anglophone Cameroonians had been robbed of their federal status, which was replaced in 1972 with a centralised unitary state called the United Republic of Cameroon and later just Republic of Cameroon. In the 1980s when TV first came to Cameroon, 20 percent of airtime was allocated to the trespasser. The Anglophones were and are still derogatorily called "les gaucheur" or "les Biafrain." The former in relation to Left Hand Traffic that though Anglophone Cameroonians in a united Cameroon were not allowed to use, was still used to associate them to their British colonisers and thereby mark them as the perpetual other by their fellow Francophone compatriots. And the latter is in relation to the Biafrans of Nigeria who. between 1967 and 1970, declared their independence amid one of the fiercest wars the African continent has ever seen. In both cases, the Anglophones are called so in an effort to remind them that they are bare trespassers in their own native land. It is a reminder that they are Cameroonians, but apart. It is a reminder that within the land of the equal, some people are more equal than others.

So, by the time I left high school in Cameroon and moved to Germany to study, the notion of trespassing had been an intimate acquaintance and companion. Thus, when ever the two first and frequently asked questions in Germany – "where are you from?" – and "when will you return?," I was neither shocked nor disheartened about the reminder of the fact that I wasn't from *here* and had to move on. But that reminder took an exponentially absurd level on two occasions that have stuck with me ever since.

One, on a blessed day in a "Meß- und Regelungstechnik" (measurement and regulation technology) class in university, a Brazilian mate and I called the tutor's attention for a question. The tutor, a middle-aged white man, walked majestically towards both of us, two of the few people of colour in class, to listen to our question. My memory fails me in the recollection of the exact question we asked, but that is rather irrelevant to this narration; rather I want to point to the response to our question. Maybe it is less the response itself in words that left the scar on my memory, but more the look on his face after I had finished asking him the question. It was a strange combination of pity and misunderstanding and sheer wariness. Then he said *"Ich kann euch das nicht wirklich erklären. Das ist für euch schwer zu verstehen, weil da wo ihr herkommt, gibt es kein technisches Denkvermögen."* (*"I can't really explain this to you. It is difficult for you to understand because where you are from there is no technical thinking capacity."*) I was 22 years old. It wasn't the audacity that shocked me, but the way his eyes betrayed his conviction and belief of what he had said.

Secondly later on towards the end of my studies, though I had more or less been very much apprised of the system and I was cognisant of my almost permanent role as trespasser, I couldn't fully buffer or absorb the comment made by another tutor. It was one of those beautiful Berlin summer afternoons. We all walked to class with the performed remissness of conscious mid-twenties. Conscious of our intelligence and diligence, and the fact that graduation was almost at the doorstep in less than a year. So when we got into class, and the tutor pulled out my assignment from the bunch to ask me, "who wrote the assignment for you?" I was not only dumbfounded but also appalled. When I asked why, she, in a calm voice and a half-smile as make-up on her face responded "in my many years of working as a tutor in this university. I know that foreign students do not write in German as well as this." In all humility, the only response that found its way through the cracks of my lips was that "not only do I write like this in German, but in five other languages."

The reason I am mentioning this is that these were two moments that remind me of an active shift from the passivity of trespassing to the activity of trespassing. That I was a trespasser was a given fact, but the necessity to embody and employ the act of trespassing as a method became evident then. There is the possibility of doing the 90° angle walk from A through B to C, while the distance from A directly to C is much shorter. The question then becomes gaining the chutzpah to do A to C as an act of resilience.

In his seminal 1957 record release The Clown, the legendary Charlie Mingus takes us on a compelling search of the somber shades of the human soul in the title track The Clown. The piece that features a narration by Jean Shepard, who tells of a rather happy colourful clown that tries all he can to please his spectators with his performances. In this process he discovers that whenever his jokes willingly or unwillingly provoked pain and suffering of the performer, his audience would laugh even more than his funniest jokes. In what was to become the clown's last performance "a rope broke, down came the backdrop, right on the back of the neck, and he went flat and something broke, this was it. It hurt way down deep inside, he tried to get up. He looked out at the audience, and man, you should've, you should've, you should've seen that crowd. They was rolling in the aisle (...) Man he really knew now. But it was too late and all he wanted was to make this crowd laugh, and they were laughing, but now he knew. That was the end of the clown. And you should have seen the bookings come in. Man his agent was on the phone for 24 hours." A revealing fact about humanity.

It isn't unfair to say that the effort to take the 90° angle in order to please his audience cost the clown his life. Trespassing then becomes the possibility of swimming against the stream, despite the awareness of the current the audience might want you to swim on or with.

Thus, at some point my realisation was that all my life had been preparing me for – from the very early days of Sunday school till this day – finding ways of performing the act of trespassing as a means of resistance without asking for forgiveness.

My first attempt to found an art space was in 2006. It was a failure, and that was OK. Running around Berlin and other cities proposing exhibition concepts to institutions of all sizes had become a daunting act. The proper path through the 90° angle would have meant going to art school rather than studying engineering, or coming from a family that had dealt with art for three or four generations, but I couldn't choose which family I was born into. So, when in 2009 I finally found a way to set up SAVVY Contemporary, it was again both a literal and metaphorical means of trespassing the so-called art world. It is then that the previous years of curating took shape as a tool of assertion, of epistemic disobedience, of guerrilla struggle in the arts and more importantly a possibility of proposing the hypotenuse. But the history of SAVVY is another act for another paper.

When the call for curators was announced for the Finland pavilion in Venice, I instinctively thought this was another opportunity to enact trespassing through performativity and curating. I am neither Finnish, nor do I have a particular affiliation to Finland. Through the invitation of Nora Sternfeld, CuMMA (Curating, Managing and Mediating Art), I had become acquainted with a part of the art and discourse scenes in Helsinki, which for me was strongly shaped by people like Christopher Wessels and Ahmed Al-Nawas, whose Master's thesis I was privileged to monitor, and Giovanna Esposito Yussif, as well as by institutions like Third Space and Museum of Impossible Forms. So, reaching out to this network in Helsinki to iointly submit a proposal was a trial to subvert what one could imagine as a Finnish nationality, to challenge the notion of national representation, to rethink what artistic and curatorial practices could actually mean within such a context. The multitude of voices, of bodies, of positions - physically, cognitively, and spiritually - became incredible sources of inspiration and possibilities of expanding the space of curatorial practice as a psychosomatic

interference within existing spaces and inference of other spaces. The notion of miracle making then came in as that possibility to deliberate on and engage in practices of the impossible. Until a few years ago, it would have been impossible to think of the members of the Miracle Workers Collective as the legitimate representations of the Finland pavilion. Not because it was impossible per se, but because human efforts to identify around the nation state have always been built around the creation of others and their exclusion. It has too often been about creating those comfortable spaces, lawns, grounds, which can be inhabited by some and others who attempt accommodating those spaces are trespassers. We "Miracle Workers" are trespassers. We make trespassing the norm. A norm that doesn't need to undo other norms but that must give space for a multiplicity of norms to coexist side by side, or even intertwined. As trespassers we choose to take the hypotenuse, but we acknowledge that there is space for everyone else who might wish to take the other way via the 90° angle.

I will permit myself to conclude by looking at previous reflections of mind around my own discipline of curating, as formulated in the essay "But You Can't Fool All The People All The Time - On The Delusions Of Care." Because in formulating the notion of "curatorialisation" within a curatorial practice, there is an indirect reflection of trespassing as care. I am interested in thinking about curating in a state of perpetual change, in a process, curating as a multiple concept that develops and adjusts self in time and space. With the notion of the curatorial I see an adjustment in function, but which comes across still as static in space and time. But with what I call "curatorialisation" I will like to propose that possibility of a curatorial practice that is malleable in form, space and time, that in its multiplicity of existences expands the scope of curatorial practice itself. In this case, instead of

understanding the music selection process of the DJ in a club as an act of curating, one would imagine a curator implementing the structure of the DJ within a process of making an exhibition, which is to say thinking of the audience of the exhibition as a DJ would think of the dancers on the dance floor.

This necessitates a deep understanding of the space, deep listening to the bodies that occupy the space, and a deep mastery of the way moods change with time across an evening of a DJ-set. There is a constant adaptation taking place. As soon as the DJ notices that the floor has come to a stand still, he needs to react, he needs to catch the attention of his dancers and needs to keep them on the move. In using this analogy to exemplify what I mean by "curatorialisation," I am in no way trying to equate the curator to a DJ, but I am trying to imagine ways of expanding the field of care of the curator's practice - a care for the artist, and art, but also a deep sense of care of the audience at the disposition of the curator. What I am proposing is that besides moving from the act of just display/staging (curating) to the acts of enacting, dramatising and performing events of knowledge (curatorial), "curatorialisation" would have to also mean employing other strategies that open up creaks and caveats of care that we might not have explored until now, and that constantly adapt themselves to the needs of the artists, art, and audience, as well as times and spaces - and most especially over extended periods of time before and beyond the exhibition itself.

Exhibitions are often always conceived as static beings. But it is this thinking of an exhibition and finding ways of vivifying an exhibition, its processes before, during and after the act (display, staging performances, and symposia) that I would like to think of as "curatorialisation." For those of us that have to carry the burdens of historical disenfranchisement, I would actually like to push that notion of "curatorialisation" to actually also relate to the notion of marronage. In the binary of "fight or flight," it is often fight that is considered the active form of resistance. But in the history of slavery in the Caribbean and Latin American slave enterprises for instance, in Barbados, Brazil, Jamaica, or Suriname, but also in the Indian Ocean, for example in La Reunion, marronage served as a possibility for slaves to escape from plantations and create maroon communities in the peripheries of slave enterprises: Be it the "petit marronage," in which people escaped for a short period of time to then return or "grand marronage," in which they escaped permanently. At the heart of it all are strategies of resistance, which sometimes led to rebellions across some colonies. In their hideouts, the maroons could challenge the plantation system by the sheer act of absence, depriving the plantation of its workforce, attacking the plantations or negotiating their freedom and autonomy, but also encouraging or inciting others to follow suit. But what is also fascinating about the act and space of marronage is the ability to retreat - both as a concept of pulling back and also a notion of caring for oneself and your kin. In my proposal of "curatorialisation" as marronage. I will like to imagine a space like SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin, MiF Helsinki, Khiasma in Paris, RAW Material Company in Dakar (just to name a few) as a spaces of retreating - not as metaphor - to organise, congregate peoples, knowledges, and things we care about and intend to care for.

As I am about to finish this short essay, I receive call. It is 8:55 AM on March 15th, 2019. Okwui Enwezor, the legendary curator, the personification of the trespasser, he who paved the way for most of us, he whose work and posture, whose extremely lucid and critical mind showed me the way, and gave me the possibility to dream of being a curator, has just passed on at age 55. In devastation I will stop writing. The trespasser par excellence has passed. Well, if this is so, one has no choice but to do all in one's power to change that fate, and at no matter what risk – eviction, imprisonment, torture, death. For the sake of one's children, in order to minimize the bill that they must pay, one must be careful not to take refuge in any delusion – and the value placed on the color of the skin is always and everywhere and forever a delusion.

I know that what I am asking is impossible. But in our time, as in every time, the impossible is the least that one can demand – and one is, after all, emboldened by the spectacle of human history in general, and American Negro history in particular, for it testifies to nothing less than the perpetual achievement of the impossible.

-James Baldwin, Letter From A Region in My Mind<sup>1</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> James Baldwin, "Letter from a Region in My Mind," *The New Yorker*, 1962, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/ 1962/11/17/letter-from-a-region-in-my-mind.

# BLACK GIRL ON THE BUS

Thirty-two seasons old and she already knows they sing of autumn, summer, spring, although winter lasts the longest.

Thirty-two seasons old and she already holds machete eyes amid chalky stalks of sugarcane who gawk, and prod, and pry.

Thirty-two seasons of snow, and not a soul has told her of another world of summer out there, so she brandishes her eyes.

Thirty-two seasons old. So soon this little life has shown her: never sheathe your steel, or else the blade sticks in the cold. Salt-fish; boiled yam white sand; blue sea;

mountain; pothole; concrete; palm tree

suntan; cocktail; cane field; white rum;

browning; dark skin; uptown; downtown;

traffic; peddler; cupped hand; spare change;

power; window; taxes; crime rate;

vaccine; school fee; hyper; tension;

orphans; widows; christenings; burials.

#### FUTURE

### POET

From Spore to organism to soil And dust

Dust?

Dust running through my fingers The slowly drying skin dying transforming Thus to dust we shall return What time is it?

Who's time is it?

Is there any time?

Knowledge transgressing language existence transcending

Sorry?

What time is it? Past, future, present?

This moment escaping, passing by like a small fly that raced through the hole of your two front teeth. Dirty, rotten, molded. Soon gone, Decomposed.

How did the plant recognized me? Hypha came together and whispered. How did it know when to bloom when to grow, when to wither?

A finger, or a root drawing a sun not so burning anymore. From the circle to a line, from a line to mycelia.

To preserve To take care softly caress

I, the miracle worker, the hope grower building a pathway from impossible to viable

Dancing with plants and fungi amoebae and bacteria. Not against time but with time and beyond leaning on the rhythms, rhythms, rhythms of the ancestors

> and in between there is still time

Growing hope hope hope and joy

> I am here. We are.

#### EXCERPT FROM *The Drowning GAME*

Every individual is a collection of relationships with time, place, memory, special people (partners, friends, children), media, school, religion, nature, life, and death. As we make our way through a random world, how does chance affect our network of relationships? Let's suppose that every (well-balanced) human relationship is subject to an implicit contract with clauses that include two basic and recognised points: trust and, more importantly, an implicit clause that stipulates that in every relationship you lose something and gain something else.

In human relationships, where does comedy begin and where does tragedy end? What do we lose and what do we gain in our journey through time? Or what does the "ideal identity" that a person dreams of look like with respect to their relationships with the world and other people?

Through "miracle water" the story of our relationships starts here!

Water as the source of life, water that makes up 71 percent of the Earth's surface, drinking water that poor people can't find, the water in rivers, seas and oceans in which refugees drown, water for capitalist factories. The water we dream of finding on other planets. No water for poor farmers! The water we pollute every day on this planet. Climate change and desertification. Water wars, water refugees.

There's no need to worry. The miracle workers are coming! They'll clean the plastic out of the water. They'll wrap shrouds around those who drown. They're the cleaners, the miracle cleaners. They'll clean away the residue of chaos by trying to understand the miraculous processes of coincidence. They'll sweep away selfishness and hatred. They are creative workers. Life is a game, a miracle, a coincidence! No dirt can stand in their way! They are miracle workers – they play, they think, they clean!

Someone once said: There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

Our story begins with three characters who happen to end up in a tank that purifies contaminated water in a balloon factory. There's a problem with the drainage system. The three workers fight for the sake of their personal miracles through their networks of relationships with order and chaos in this life.

Character 1: In a remote village where it no longer rains, a young man watches his grandfather pray to the sky for the miracle of rain. The young man thinks that the real miracle is to risk your life to save your life. He crosses deserts, valleys, mountains, and seas, like the heroes of mythology. He ends up in in the capitalist paradise in a tank of contaminated water in a large factory that makes balloons for children's parties.

#### Character 2:

A young professional ring game player in his country and also an

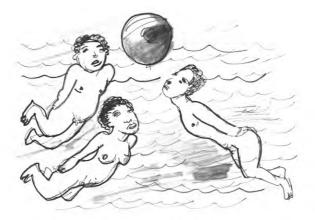
artist. He has fled because of war. When he was young he heard his elder brother say that "miracle" players rely solely on chance, like any other players, but they may be expert at reading the probabilities. His father said that such players carried magic talismans with them. His mother said that God put His secret in it. As a boy, he had wanted only to be a "miracle" player, ever since he started colouring and discovered that one colour plus another colour makes three, not like in maths, where one plus one makes two. Red plus yellow equals orange. It's another sun. The miracle of art revealed itself to him. He became an artist and an amateur player of the ring game, but ended up in the tank of contaminated water in the factory.

Character 3: The miracle here is that Character 3's alcoholic father didn't quite man-

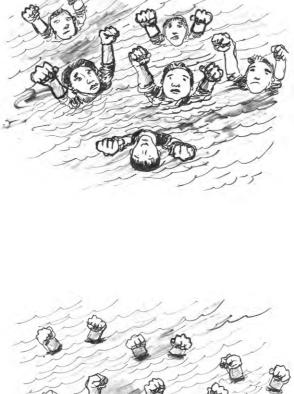
age to kill her. The girl managed to take shelter with friends. She studied drama. She's struggling to find work in the theatre. There isn't much work in the art world. She worked as a cleaner in various places in the city where she was born until a new balloon factory opened and she started working on a temporary contract. Now she's in the tank of contaminated water, maybe acting out her role in life! She still believes that miracles only exist in the world of childhood because children think everything they see is amazing and wonderful. Childhood is the land of wonders and miracles. When you leave childhood you leave the world of miracles forever. It's "systems" that kill off wonder and imagination. The Drowning Game

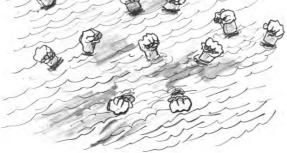
"Any and all water is the color of drowning." Cioran's email

The water is contaminated with children's balloons.



Illustrations by Muhaned Durubi





## لاجئ في الجنة الاوربية!

لد.

### A REFUGEE IN THE PARADISE That is Europe

Translated by Jonathan Wright

You escape death.

They hit you on the border.

They insult you in the racist newspapers.

They analyse your child's dead body on television.

They get together and discuss your past and your future.

In their pictures they draw you drowning.

They put you in their museums and applaud.

They decide to stop hitting you and set up

a military unit to confront you.

Academics get new grant money to research your body and your soul.

Politicians drink red wine after an emergency meeting to discuss your fate.

They consult history in search of an answer for your daughter, who's freezing in the forest cold.

The neo-Nazis insult you and burn down your house.

The neo-fascists climb their way into parliament on your shoulders.

You are the nightmare of people old and new.

They weep crocodile tears over your pain.

They come out in demonstrations against you and build walls. Green activists put up pictures of you in the street.

Others sit on their sofas, comment wearily

on your picture on Facebook,

and go to sleep.

They strip away your humanity in debates

that are clever and sharp as knives.

They write you down today and, with selfishness as their eraser, make you disappear the next morning.

They expect to come across their own

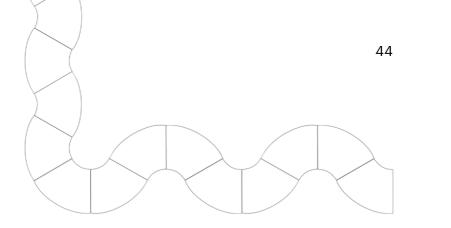
humanity through your tragedy.

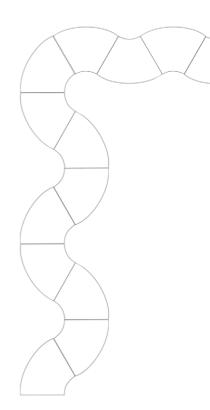
They take you into their paradise, then flog you night and day with their horror at your eyes, which radiate fear and hope.

The past goes to sleep, and wakes up inside you.

The present engulfs you.

You produce children for their paradise and grow old. You die.





## PATTERNS TO BREAK

Intuitions for setting the encounter as a format

A miracle is the suspension of a calamitous situation that goes on for a long time. From a spiritual point of view, it t could entail solving a long-term problem - for instancee a spell or a punishment - with divine assistance, witith little or no help from humans, other than the saints deesignated by the gods. From an infrastructural point of View, the miracle could translate into an interesting tool: it would still be about solving problems, like hungger or health issues, but relying on the faith of a coullective who believes in it. The miracle would fifirst emerge as a general perception, before it could bescome fact: to have the impossible as a possibility foor making better conditions. It could even eventually appear as the only possible option to improve an onggoing harmful situation. If we follow the metaphor, fone might ask: better for whom? Since miracles shift the balance of power from one side to another, they crfreate a relationship that is unbalanced with the privilfieges of the chosen ones, as in the case of the miraccle of the welfare state, made only viable with the exploitation of the colonial infrastructure.

In any case, miracles are a moment of exception. They introduce a disruption in a given order. This irruption megans changing protocols, patterns, rhythms, habits: the alteration of the composition of human and/or non-human life. To practice a miracle would mean to operate variations in those rhythms, trying to improve the life conditions of the miracle receivers, breaking and recomposing everyday patterns of life. Miracles would produce symbols to gather around, introducing different directions of the preexisting symbolic structures in order to set different habits. In this sense, one might be tempted to propose that the production of culture and the delivery of art might be part of forming those moments of disruption. Is it possible to understand a miracle not as an impact, but as a slow formation that operates on a molecular level? Perhaps we can think with Suely Rolnik: A certain quality of presence that mobilizes within us the will and courage to express the singularity of our experience, not only in speech but also in action.<sup>1</sup> Culture is one of the ways in which humans gain their perception of the world. It produces, among other systems, the ways in which we ac, commodate ourselves to the entities surrounding us. These habits compose – at least partly – our perceptions and our actions. And depending on the scale of changing those habits, an event might be worth being considered a miracle.

Following Dorothea von Hantelmann.<sup>2</sup> the exhibited (i.e., ex-hibited) work of art is preceded by an act of separation that is constitutive of this dispositif, an act of extracting the work from its original context. It's pertinent to notice that habits and exhibitions are connected to that same root of habere, to hold; to possess.<sup>3</sup> Although we don't have much space here, let's boldly introduce a very common description of this lineage: in many genealogies, the foundations of exhibition and museum-making history would start with the wunderkammer. In that constellation, the conception of the exhibition, implies a process of extraction, which in the genealogy of exhibition-making would link directly the wunderkammer with the principles of the originary accumulation. These cabinets were made from objects, matters, art, and marvels coming mainly from the colonies. But usually in those narrations, the cultural ecosystems from where

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, "Molecular Revolution in Brasil," Semiotexte, Los Angeles, 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Dorothea Von Hantelmann, "Notes on the Exhibition," *The Book of Books: documenta* 13 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> "Ex- habere shares a root meaning 'to hold' with the Latin habitus. Less predictable is the meaning of Latin habitare, 'to have in permanent possession, to keep,' whence 'to stay put; dwell' from English has, again via French, inhabit and habitat. Habitare is the frequentative form of habere." From Anatoly Liberman, "An etymologist looks at habits and customs," Oxford University Press' Academic Insights for the Thinking World, https://blog.oup.com/2011/04/habit/.

those objects were coming from have been left aside, as if other forms of writing wouldn't be translatable  $a_{t all}^{\dagger}$ .

These collections produced taxonomic, systems first, and then – in that same genealogy – they, would develop through private art galleries, and scientific collections. It would be followed up with museums and universal fairs, wherein both the economic, the social and the cultural aspects would be clearly a sparent and interwoven. The next step would be the neutral spaces to present art specimens: the infamous white cube. As we all know, museums and galleries are, part of the disciplinary complex where the experience of the visitors, until very recently, consisted of walks in silence: machines for the production of individuation, instead of collective emancipation.

Instead, we suggest that the relation of this ex-habitare could be understood as the moment in which habits are disrupted. How can the exhibition operate not from a process of extraction, but from one that produces a disruption of given patterns? Or even better, how can a project propose a porous system that gives time for re-composition and space for difference?

In order to propose divergent genealogies, instead of the exhibition, we can think of the idea of the encounter: the moment of negotiation of narratives when different entities meet. These constellations might be composed of people, objects, artworks, sounds, texts of different kinds, movable and non-movable images, devices, advertisements, contracts, critical reviews, whispers, protocols, and so on. The aim would be pushing (art) history beyond the possession of objects and the defeating of people's narratives; not one narrative pushing the other to the obscurity, but providing positions to practice multiple storytellings.

The encounter is a process that is conversational by definition, meaning that there more than one presence producing discourse at the same time. It is made of different entities that come together, generating a common space, which is not necessarily free of conflict. The encounter is the dimension where those different elements co-exist, generating a shared narration, even if it is dissensual. As on a molecular scale, the encounter would propose an interchange that is osmotic. Few of the signifiers of each element would alter the composition of the other elements; as in a conversation, any of the phrases that are introduced by each off the speakers bring path to the general discourse. The intrerchange wouldn't mean a total exchange, but an alteration of the different compositions after some of the components cross the threshold. For instance, the items that enter (or leave) a collection have a direct influence in the histories that the collection is telling. Th€ interesting element there it is not only that the re-arrang/ements of property change the possible future exhibitions and therefore narrations. In my opinion, the, potency lies in the negotiative dimension that that kind o'f process opens. It is no longer - only - about the ownership of given objects, but the common imagination towards a fairer society, the disruption of the norm (or habit) that was supposedly untouchable. The encounter is a possible word to name this entanglement, that goes beyond of showing objects together in a given 'space, and includes its possibilities on constellative work.

Following the proposal of Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, membranes would facilitate the trespassing of some of the information required in this conception. The challenge is to imagine the infrastructure necessary for those encounters to happen, and to do so in a way that it can be continuously changing and remaining porous, without discarding anyone's legacy. Without discarding anybody. At the same time, it's important to keep asking about ourselves: how to edit, select, and narrate. In that sense, these movable membranes might work not only as infrastructure to be used, but as a metaphor. Which are the movable habits and protocols that caán be implemented, so they can be altered to create differeynt patternings when necessary?

Following the curatorial proposal, the welf<sub>i</sub>fare state is conceived as a miracle, one based on a situation of privilege and unequal distribution. Architecture mightil be one of the most clear expressions of this miracle. Ifin its massiveness of building across countries, and its local ness of creating utilitarian infrastructures, lie one of the keys of the past constructions of the future. Spatial corganization is a precious element to understand the composition of that system.

Spatial organization is also a fundamental tool when it comes to switching, from exhibition making to setting of encounters. It is fas well a very suitable instrument for re-reading those past constructions of the future. The task is understanding how to reactivate previous findings. In the case of the Movable Membrane, this re-reading bring some forms in spired by the work of the Aaltos. Their work in an early strage was already inspired by natural forms. They introduced elements less based on a rational scientific moste of distribution of space, and in more organic wavee-like shapes. By bringing these forms, the project looks to act on multiple levels. The first is to point out in the building the relevant signature of the Finnish cultural landscape and reclaim the legacy of both Aino Marsio-Aalto and Alvar Aalto. The hagiographies would usually bring the name of the latter, leaving in shadows the former. The second is about introducing references to the architecture of a period that put together the construction of the national identity with the welfare state.

As stated before, this narrative of the welfare has to be reviewed and renegotiate, looking for elements of privilege. The third one is both conceptual and functional: by introducing a modular wave, we seek to offer a system of re-reading and recombination that brings at the same time apart and together possible narrations. It sustains different discourses, providing a mutant display and a place for encounters.

Let's try something more descriptive: this is a serpent. This is a double spiral helix. This is a tower. This is a display. This is a place to gather around. This is a place for books to seat. This a place for stories to be told. This is a place for stories to be told. This is a threshold. This is a vane. This is a frame. This is a room divider. This is a narrative machine. This is a counteernarrative. This is choreography. This is a chance. This is many tables. This is a column. This is a stage. This is , plurifocal. This is a cacophony. This is a harmonic composition.

Such a conception necessitates an openness that keeps the narrative unfinished, and therefore imminent, as Nestor García Canclini would propose: "we are in the imminence, and we called art to the ways of working in that threshold. Not to get int to a territory, but to describe a tension. (...) Beingy in the outside and the inside, be book or artwork, and at the same time to be a good, to be exhibited in muse sums and to be an organism for human rights, to enduring an author and at the same time, question it suthority. That is precisely what I refer as immine nce."<sup>4</sup> With Canclini, we can imagine the miracle as a narrative tool and the encounter as the form at for those tensions and rights to be present.

"<sup>F</sup>Estamos en la inminencia y llamamos arte a las maneras de trírabajar en ese umbral. No para ingresar a un territorio, sino para d'describir una tensión. (...) A ese estar entre afuera y adentro, ser libro u obra artística y ser mercancía, exhibirse en museos y en un organismo de derechos humanos, enunciarse como autor y dudar de su poder, a eso, justamente, me refiero cuando hablo de inminencia." Nestor Garcia Canclini, La sociedad sin relato. Antropología y estética de la inminencia (Buenos Aires: Katz Editores, 2010).

## WORKING Lno Work

My artistic practice addresses labour and employment, workers' rights, and the work-related challenges we currently face. I have naturally gravitated towards these themes since, during the course of my own life, I have had the opportunity to work several jobs and be a member of many different workplace communities. Aged fifteen, I moved to Helsinki alone and worked alongside my secondary school studies. For the first three years, I worked in telesales, as this was one of the few types of employment available to an underage person like me. After that, I workedin various customer service jobs, as a factory worker and as a cleaner. I would clean offices, hotels, shopping centres, and trains. More often than not, I was on reasonably long-term contracts that allowed me to familiarise myself with a variety of workplace communities and experience first hand the problems and issues that would arise within them. In this article, I aim to highlight some of the issues that have prompted me to focus on work and employment through my artistic practice, and why I continue to actively participate in trade union activism.

It is necessary to discuss work and our workplace communities, because the way we work and the terms and conditions under which we do so in Finland today have undergone a radical shift since the recession-hit during the 1990s. The very definition of what is meant by concepts like "work" and "labour" have changed too, and the wider themes and topics relating to them appear to have vanished from public debate entirely. For many decades, large corporations, employer organisations and right-wing politicians have systematically sought to fragment workplace communities. At the same time, the labour union movement and the political left have been content to occupy a more passive role, defending existing rights and deflecting attacks on them, while leaving the initiative to the center and right politics to constrain labour into neoliberal policies. For today's precariat, the unions look like insurance providers and bureaucratic institutions that exist almost exclusively to defend the rights of workers in permanent jobs. As work precarity spreads and inequality grows, strikes no longer have the impact they once did; strikebreakers can no longer be dismissed as class traitors or accused of pursuing their own self-interest. Nowadays workers are not in the same boat anymore. By withholding their labour, the social gap increases radically: some might lose their unemployment benefits, while others might jeopardise a residence permit, and by such, losing one's work is not only a matter of daily subsistence but becomes a matter of life and death.

Workers with employee status have been increasingly pushed towards entrepreneurship, which gives legal permission to the employers to seize their basic rights and benefits, such as sick pay and pension contributions that continue to be part and parcel of regular employment. Platform and gig economy jobs such as the ones used for taxi and cleaning services or food and merchandise deliveries are amongst the most clear example of how insecure conditions are, and where these types of malpractices are happening.

Just a few years ago, there was a campaign in Finland against zero-hour contracts with the aim to defend the right of employees to have at least some clarity over their working hours. At moment the freelancers and forced entrepreneurs under the platform economy are globally fighting for their rights and demanding to at least be recognized as employees in their diverse working relations, even under zero-hour contracts. This provides an overview of how dismantled and unstable workers' rights currently are. It also gives perspective into how important it is to ensure that work and employment-related issues remain on the agenda; particularly now that, as I see it, our attitudes and values with regard to the realities of employment have shifted so radically.

In the public debate, unemployment is often portrayed as a form of exclusion that hinders the individual's social and political engagement. It is perceived that the work we do determines our identities to an overwhelming degree, even when that work is done purely to support oneself, to make ends meet, and have bread on the table. Gainful employment acts as a symbol of our ability to manage our lives "successfully," it is a marker of our social status; in order to qualify as a "good citizen" and not as a parasite, we are expected to work, even if that means accepting work in exchange for government unemployment benefits.

Interestingly, the literal translation of the Finnish word for employer, työnantaja, is "a work giver" while palkansaaja, "a salary receiver" can be used as a synonym for an employee. These terms give the erroneous impression that, as the work provider, the employer doesn't necessarily need the employees but is graciously handing out employment to those who just can't manage without a bit of a hustle to fill their day. The way the debate is headed, the literal meaning of these words is proving strangely apposite, prophetic even. By contrast, unemployment tends to be frowned upon, as the unemployed are stigmatised and blamed for having poor self-motivation and selfcontrol. An excellent example of this are the recent debates surrounding the training courses offered to jobseekers by private sector providers contracted by Finland's employment services. Many participants have reported that they are patronising, sneery and, worse, entirely pointless.

In the capitalist society, work is seen as a value in itself, and the current drive for "creating employment" is enough to justify severe human rights abuses and environmental degradations. No matter what the work is, what is important is to have work to be validated as a useful member of society, and create employment to be rendered as a successful politician. It is clear that social attitudes are hardening and there is an increasing focus on achievement and success. Successful people expect to be able to grab what's theirs, without bothering to reflect on how they've got it or whether they may have caused harm to others along the way. Taking a loaf of bread without payment is a crime, while tax avoidance is entirely legal and employers can knowingly undercut minimum wage requirements without any fear of sanctions. Stealing, it turns out, can be entirely acceptable, depending on who is doing it.

The public debate surrounding these issues, or rather the lack of it, plays a key role in shaping our attitudes towards different professions, job roles, and employment sectors. What types of work are viewed as valuable and important, which are the undesirable ones, and what is missing from the conversation altogether? It is clear that jobs that are seen to deliver high levels of productivity are more valued. Public infrastructure maintenance as well as the care and education sectors are rarely associated with it. What we understand as productivity is usually defined through the laws of economics: financial profit-making industries equate to efficiency of production. By contrast, there are sectors that are relegated to the margins of public debate, the prevailing working conditions within them warranting barely a mention. Sectors that are responsible for creating wellbeing and generating opportunities for others are among some of the least valued.

Invisible labour is the term used to describe structures where the employees carry out their work invisibly, whether at the behest of the employer or to satisfy customer expectations. Cleaning, for example, is considered a largely invisible activity because of the way the work is organised. In offices, cleaning usually takes place late in the evening, at night or first thing in the morning, which means that the employees rarely get to witness their cleaner at work. Invisible work is also defined by the fact that it only becomes visible when it is not done. In some ways, of course, cleaning is the most visible of all jobs. If all cleaners, the lowest paid members of our economy, were to go on strike for a week, our entire society would come to a standstill. By contrast, if some of our highest earners were to do the same, most of the people would not notice any difference.

One of the greatest challenges trade unions are facing right now is that they must be able to take the initiative to strive for an even redistribution of value and means that labour produce, to push forward up-to-date forms to protect workers' power and dignity of work. The struggle solely for unemployment is a foolish utopian aspiration. We need to turn on its head the notion that we all need to work. We should instead be talking about the types of work that are harmful and the types of work that are necessary and considering how we can go about sharing the work that is both available and needed, and strive for work possibilities that are meaningful and properly remunerated.

Trade unions could lead the way and commit to introducing radical reforms within their own organisations. They could, for example, link the salaries of their own senior staff to the salaries of their members. After all, the salaries of senior trade union operatives are significantly higher than those of the often low-paid workers they represent. Trade union members should be offered the tools they need for taking direct action in the workplace and provided with training on cross-sectoral solidarity action instead of just being asked to vote in union elections for time to time to choose a representatives from among their fellow members. Extra parliamentary actions by trade unions have been extremely important throughout the history of Finland. But the world has changed and this means that the unions also have to acknowledge and adapt to those changes in ways that truly benefit the working sectors they are aiming to protect.

Most importantly, in this time of constant uncertainty and fragmentation of working life it is necessary to remember all the possibilities that people have in themselves and the necessity of collective action to be able to produce changes in the multiple working environments. It is quite comforting to know that working collectivities as for instance the CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo), a Spanish confederation of anarcho-syndicalist labour unions, had more than 1,500,000 members at its best during the 1930s and the members were successfully engaged in self-management. This means that in order to build a strong union what is needed is active members who are genuinely committed and also equally part of the decision-making. According to CNT's union structure, the decisions are made without executive power and no one collects money for representing the workers. It is evident that the trade unions served when their aim was to organize resistance and failed because they became part of the oppressive bureaucratic system. Yet, it doesn't mean that the trade union movement should give up on all the structures that have been built. However, it is necessary to find constantly new forms and structures of organizing our resistance against exploitation and precarisation.

A contemporary example that brings hope could be for instance, #justiceforcouriers campaign started by self-organised freelance couriers fighting for their rights under the platform economy in many different countries. These workers, whose employee status is not even adeguate for getting a membership from trade unions, have started from scratch on their own without money and institutional support. Yet they have won several court cases transnationally against the companies exploiting them as a result of self-organised resistance. The campaign just keeps growing worldwide and getting more and more attention from the media and even some trade unions have started to take these worker activists seriously. In the end, it is the power of the people, collective practices and engaged collective action that really matters. Once the structures within the various labour movements began to respect transparent practices, and shift towards genuine engagement and participation of the workers in the decision-making processes, then the opportunities for change are truly endless.

## WE SHOULD ALL BE DREAMING Vol. 3

This is a dream, where two women of color a have a talk about collective futures.

**Sonya** Why should we be dreaming? Or what are you dreaming of?

#### Maryan

Looking at the world today, what else can we do but dream? I dream of freedom, like actual freedom. What Assata Shakur describes when she says, freedom to grow, freedom to blossom, for everyone. What about you? **S:** I remember us having a discussion about reactionary practices. That I am tired of just reacting to oppressive structures. I think that is also somehow our problem, that we will never move past the fight. I think I am trying to nurture this space of dreaming just to keep in mind what are we fighting for.

**M:** Yeah, I remember that. For me, it's frustrating and tiring being in constant state of alert, always having to be ready to react. Makes me feel like I am not in control, like someone else is making the choices for me, what I should think, do, fight.. Carving out time and space for dreaming is having a break from that.

**S:** I think I don't know who I would be without the fight. And I am trying to dream of that. Who would I be without the struggle!

**M:** I can relate to that! People asking questions like, how or why I became an activist, the question reveals that the person asking has no clue of the reality I face. It's not like I had an actual choice in the matter.

#### S: AS A SURVIVAL STRATEGY!!!!

**M:** Exactly, right? If you deal with oppressive structures on a daily basis and they have an impact on most things in your life, how do you NOT BECOME an activist? For me, activist is what Angela Davies describes when she says: I am not longer accepting what I can't change, I am changing what I cannot accept.

**S**: I am dreaming of belonging and dreaming of a world that could include all of us.

By the way, have you read Sylvia Wynter? If everything in the human world is based on the notion that whiteness equals humanity, in order to move forward we should SHAKE EVERYTHING. EVERY. SINGLE. CONCEPT.

It's not about being good or bad, it's that everything is based on this hierarchical capitalist patriarchy. So you can't claim any position of being good or being feminist or being anti-racist as an excuse not to move.

**M**: Nothing about this system we are living is natural. Nothing about it is neutral.

**S:** The first thing is to denaturalize, and thus to make visible. For example who has to carry prefixes and who doesn't? Words have performative power and they change the way we think. Words make worlds.

#### PAUSE

**S:** Do you think we can dream also for others? Or from someone else's perspective?

**M:** I think we can. My dream involves, us – human beings, realizing that we need each other and we need collaboration to survive the imminent future. We can agree that one of the things climate change demonstrates is that only through collaboration can we change the destructive course we are on. So in a sense, my dream is about acknowledging the existing facts. Colonialism, imperialism, capitalist system, racism, climate change are all fruits of the same tree. I dream we'd want to work together.

**S:** Future is always a potentiality, it's always just about to emerge but it never arrives. But yet we are constantly

creating this future. Every time I make something, I make it for the future. The future is in five seconds, five minutes, five hours and 5000 future. If every single word I am saying and every thought I am having is somehow informed by the present ideologies, how can I dream and thus create towards a collective future that is not based on the struggles of yesterday? How to deviate myself?

**M:** Maybe the utopia is what middle class, western people think they're living, just take out the oppression, sexism, hierarchies and the unnecessary suffering of marginalized groups and voilá.

**S**: But if everybody is not free, nobody is free. Even those with power are still suffering from guilt and the fear that they might lose all their privilege since they were gained with somebody else's work, suffering, blood.

#### But can there be equality with hierarchy?

**M:** My friend David said quite well that of course there can be. It just wouldn't be similar hierarchies as those we now know. They'd be based on responsibility over one another. And thinking of that, we have power over the young humans as we raise them, that doesn't make us superior to them, just responsible for them?

**S**: How to practice collective dreaming? And before we can dream collectively we have to somehow establish a "we"...

**M:** I guess we ask these questions without expectations of answers. We each dream, and having a platform to dream together allows us to negotiate between dreams. Your dream becomes mine, or at least I am a stakeholder in it, as I exist near you, with you in the same space, same community...

#### PAUSE

**M:** It is so important to think of the "we" and get rid of any romantic illusions of sameness or similarity when you start dreaming together and really acknowledge the vast differences there are in desires, preferences, communication styles, goals, and intentions. I thought I knew, reading Audre Lorde, but NO! I think we need to dream complexly and allow for unexpectedness.

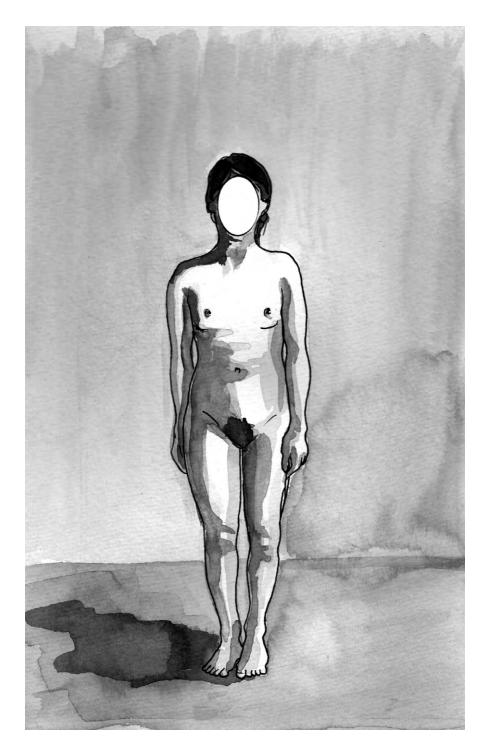
**S:** So the we is super contextual and ever changing. Perhaps it's not only about leaving space for the "we" to change but also the dream to change. I like that! let the we change and dream change!

**M:** And also if we look at the current existing system that creates marginalization and creates the need to connect through that shared experience of falling outside the norm, the future can and will be different. So we also look further, when it's our humanity that connects us and shared interests not just a messed up system that forces us into boxes that can never fully accommodate all that we are.

**S:** Yes!! When we are in the future that will be different, what would we dream of then? What would we desire? Will it be something else than money, fame or eternal youth?

**M:** What would the world be like after the struggles?

S: What would this moment be like without the struggles?



# A PICTURE OF US

I study a photograph of a woman standing and looking at the camera. Her face is obscured by an oval so that we cannot recognise her, perhaps for ethical reasons, or because her personality is not important. Who she is matters neither to the photographer nor to the one who kept the photo. We do not even know her name. The oval deflects my gaze onto her naked body, her breasts, her pubic hair, her posture. The memory of the photoshoot, which is not from my personal experience but from that of my people, almost chokes me, making it difficult to breathe. I wish the picture did not exist. Certainly the woman would also wish that her nude photo were no longer distributed. For though I am alluding to a collective trauma of our people, this is essentially an individual's experience of the moment when her dignity was violated by a camera.

Like me, the woman in the photo is a Sámi. She may be slightly younger than me. Perhaps she is a mother, just as I am. Without knowing it, we parents pass our own traumas down to our children. Whether we wish it or not, the way we have been treated influences our children's self-esteem and self-image. The linear time span separating me from the woman is almost a century. I am alive today, and she may already be dead. In my era, representatives of the majority population no longer make us stand naked by permission of a university, offending our dignity and self-respect in as many ways as before. They no longer seek scientific proof that we are inferior to them: that we are dirty, ugly, dimwitted representatives of a Mongoloid race. The woman in the photograph, on the other hand, lived in an era when the Sámi had to submit to being photographed, whether they chose to or not.

The age of racial research is over, or so we are told. It is no longer appropriate even to use the word "race." Nevertheless, we do not notice how racial research continues to be part of our lives."You don't look anything like a Sámi" is something a tall blonde Sámi may hear. Or, if a Sámi is short and dark, his or her appearance may be annotated with "of course, you Sámi always look like that: short, dark and slant-eyed." Even though a comment on someone's appearance may not be intended to be negative or racist at all, it is a reflection of racism. When the appearance of a people has been defined through the eyes of outsiders and then reinforced for decades in textbooks, that image will continue living from one age to the next, encouraging successive generations to reprise the legacy of racial doctrine.

The influence of racial research is still evident in many souvenir shops and in numerous homes, both in Finland and abroad. Innocuous postcards of Sámi posing for the camera are part of the same chain of making someone the Other. These postcards derive from a great number of photographs taken by researchers and travellers, and similar postcards are still being sold. The Sámi of the postcards were not, and are still not, identified by name. They are called "Lapps from Enontekiö" or "Lapp girls in a boat." Nowadays the word "Sámi" has replaced the derogatory term "Lapp," but the individuals in the postcard photograph are still not identified by name, even though we can still see the name of the photographer. Telling the name shows who has influence: who is valuable. Anonymity, in turn, shows who is merely an object.

As far as we know, the first photographs of the Sámi were taken in 1855. Being treated as an object has such a long history that we often do not even react to it. The time when tourists take pictures of us is seldom a special moment for the Sámi, and the same applies to when we are stopped in the street and asked questions about our culture. We may have become used to this: we may have internalised the role of being ready to represent our people at any time. From the mid-1800s to the 1930s, the Sámi travelled in so-called *Lapp caravans* to European fairs, circuses, and zoos to be stared at. People wearing traditional Sámi clothing still encounter similar reactions in the street nowadays, but are no longer paid for their performance as in the days of the Lapp caravans. When the Sámi of the past were taking their reindeer trains to Berlin and other European cities to represent a primitive people, Zacharias Topelius wrote his classic on Finland, The Book of Our Land, which was still read in Finnish schools as recently as in the 1940s: the Lapp is short with a low forehead; his cheekbones stick out and his eyes are small. He is naturally of a slow, melancholic and sullen type. This image of the Sámi is still alive and reflected in innocent remarks about the appearance of the Sámi today.

Photographing the Sámi is also a tradition of racial research. They say that an entire village might go into hiding when the Sámi heard that yet another researcher or photographer was approaching the village with his instruments and devices. It was even rumoured that photos of naked Sámi would end up in newspapers or be turned into erotic material. A picture of a Sámi mother nursing her baby made the cover of the weekly Suomen Kuvalehti in 1933. For some reason, nude photographs and intimate moments such as breast-feeding are taboo for the Sámi. Maybe nudity is not natural to us, as we have had to cover our bodies in an Arctic climate. We have shown our beauty through traditional clothing, rather than by parading the curves of our bodies. Sámi attire has revealed whether we are wealthy, skilled craft makers, or good spouses-to-be. Our attire also shows to which family and area we belong. Our bodies and nudity have been reserved for ourselves and our spouses. Even for me, a modern Sámi, the idea of wearing a bikini in public or going to a public sauna, to say nothing of nude photographs, evokes feelings of discomfort and shame. I can only imagine the feelings of a woman living in an era when chastity played an even bigger role in women's lives at being photographed naked or having pictures of breast-feeding published.

Science nowadays can no longer impinge on my womanhood or chastity, but the wish for the Sámi to

continue *looking like Sámi* persists. We are still given the role of being there for others, and reflecting what they are not. Our role in images and cinematography is to represent those who are still in connection with Mother Earth, and who live in harmony with the natural world, wearing the attire that is part of our culture. Maybe the fact that we look different from them gives them a sense of security, a feeling that there is still something that is original and primitive. It might be the reason for the persistent wish to continue photographing the Sámi in traditional clothing together with reindeer, rather than in an office, wearing a two-piece suit.

My first memory of being treated as an object is from when I went to primary school. I was going to the shop with my family after the closing ceremony of the school year. There were tourists in the village, and they cried out enthusiastically when they saw me and my little sister. They made us stand in front of the shop so that they could take photos. Our mother stood by, watching. It was in no way a special moment, and we neither talked about it nor questioned it. These things happen. It must have also happened many times before. But this was the moment that stuck in my mind. Maybe it was the moment when I understood that we were somehow different from other people. Or did I, after all, blame my Sámi clothing for getting me into a situation where I did not want to be, and into which I have also been forced so many times since then?

In earlier times the Sámi believed that the camera would steal something essential from the subject of a photograph. This essence could be the soul for one, the spirit for another, or something indefinable for a third person. Such photographs fragment my spirit and cast it to the four winds, taking it into holiday albums, newspapers, and maybe even advertisements. Photography evokes anxiety in me when I am only allowed the role of an object. So much so that I no longer wear my Sámi clothing, my dearest dress, my second skin, outside the Sámi region. I do not want to walk streets where people call out Lapp jokes made up by Finns. I do not want to feel like some circus animal for tourists, an artefact of the Finnish tourism industry, but at the same time I am distressed because I am selling out and letting others decide what I wear.

#### Jokaisessa saamelaiskodissa nyhjöttää nurkassa antropologi.

#### An anthropologist lurks in the corner of every Sámi home.

#### A modern Sámi saying

Researchers, storytellers and artists have always found the Sámi people fascinating, and modern times are no exception. Along with Native Americans, the Sámi are purportedly one of the most extensively studied peoples in the world. The first explorers in the area were probably researchers from Europe: France, Italy and Germany. The research done on the Sámi has focused on our indigenous spirituality and on our sources of livelihood, languages and customs. It has also been necessary and useful to the Sámi, in some cases. Some non-Sámi researchers have assimilated into the Sámi community and worked throughout their lives for the benefit of the Sámi and Sámi languages. These people have earned their place and status in the community. They have become researchers within the community who know the Sámi culture and language well and perform important work for this small nation.

Besides researchers who are well-versed in Sámi culture and language, those less acquainted with the community are also fascinated by Sámi culture to such an extent that probably every Sámi has been invited to participate in more than one study and documentary. These studies may examine the relationship of the Sámi with the natural environment, the use of language, or the digestive tract of the Sámi. I alone have been asked several times to participate in studies conducted by complete outsiders. Besides individual Sámi, several Sámi institutions such as the Sámi Parliament devote a great deal of time and scarce resources to answering enquiries from outside researchers and film-makers. Annoyingly, such enquiries often reveal that the researcher or storyteller lacks even basic knowledge of the Sámi or their language. If researchers do not even know the basics here, how can we ensure that their findings will be correct or even ethical, and how can researchers avoid faulty interpretations caused by lack of comprehension? The passion of researchers and artists for studying and recording Sámi culture is so avid that the Sámi are growing weary of such research. I am certainly fed up with being an object for others. Instead, I would like to share narratives on my own terms: to be a storyteller. I do not want to tell my stories as an object to be used by others.

External researchers and storytellers have been specifying and relating Sámi narratives for so long that even the Sámi may no longer know what is true and what is not. For example, there is a story about a Finnish researcher who was obsessed with discovering the location of the sacred sites of the Sámi. A few Sámi decided to show him an ordinary rock, calling it a sacred rock just to get rid of the researcher, but this academic information on the holy rock is now transmitted to new scholars. The Sámi themselves have primarily passed down their history and traditional knowledge orally. The boarding school policy of assimilation pursued by the Finnish State damaged many generations, disturbing family relations and disrupting the natural transmission of traditional knowledge in many families, leaving an open sore that we are now seeking to mend in various ways through decolonisation.

In seeking to create a connection with lost or vanishing knowledge, we present-day generations have to rely on old material collected by non-Sámi researchers and storytellers. But reading and looking at this material is confusing, as it often clearly portrays the Sámi as objects. Academic articles and claims are also not necessarily based in any way on Sámi reality or a Sámi world view, but are only the perspective of a Finnish scholar on a nation that lives and thinks in a different way.

Nowadays I know how to protect myself from research: I simply turn down interviews. I have purged the good Sámi syndrome ingrained over generations. I can also protect myself from cameras and photographs, simply by not wearing Sámi dress outside the Sámi homelands. Wearing traditional clothing in Sápmi, the Land of the Sámi, is a different matter. Failing to wear it among my own people would be a sign of cultural estrangement or assimilation. I also feel safe among the Sámi. I am not an object, but myself at my most genuine.

No photos on saamelaislapsen ensimmäinen lause.

"No photos" is the first sentence of a Sámi child.

#### A modern Sámi saying

Though my Finnish husband did not immediately understand my fear of being treated as an object, he has also begun to feel disquiet now that we have two small children and tourists gather round them seeking unauthorised photographs. This treatment of our children helps him understand how we Sámi feel about being the eternal object. Where photographs once fragmented my soul and carried it to several countries, those of my children, aged one and four, may now have reached every corner of the globe. And the only way I can protect my children is to dress them in our traditional clothing only for the Sámi community, only in the area where the Sámi are a majority. Nor does it help nowadays that tourists are flocking to small Sámi villages.

At the same time, I know how ridiculous my anxiety is. Photographs should not need to evoke such panic. Is it possible that my traumas do not arise from my own life? Maybe they come from a more distant past. We know that traumas modify our genetic material and are passed on to later generations. This means that I bear the traumas of my parents, grandparents and great grandparents. The racial research done on the Sámi in the twentieth century is but a small example of how the Sámi have always been in a subordinate position in relation to the majority population, public authorities, and settlers. To me, the flash of a camera evokes shattering experiences from an era of boarding schools, when small children were removed from their homes to an often brutally violent environment in which they did not know the language. For me, it also evokes feelings associated with wartime evacuation, with the arrival of settlers in Sápmi, with the expropriation of our lands, and with public exhibition in zoos.

Finns in the past have always sought to show the Sámi that they must be cleansed of the features that make them different. That they are the ones The Book of Our Land – the book everyone knows from school – talks about. And, in particular, that they are people who have no right to their lands. Though the Finnish State has been unable to show how the lands and waters of Sápmi were suddenly taken over by the State, Finnish society does not seem very interested in this. On the other hand, the image of Sámi yoiking among the reindeer in their Sámi attire is extremely important for the national tourism brand of Finland. There is a contradiction here. Some want to view us as a natural people roaming free in the wilderness, but at the same time the right to our lands and waters remains unacknowledged – a right that would in practice allow us to live in harmony with the natural world without constant fear of mining, mass tourism, logging, water bottling, and other operations seeking to exploit the resources of the Arctic.

The history of photographing the Sámi is not an emotional issue only for me, but touches the entire Sámi community. Many Sámi institutions and individual Sámi have repatriated photos taken by outsiders to the Land of the Sámi. They have sought to give the anonymous Sámi of these photos a name and a family - to find out who these people were. The aim has been to show appreciation and respect for ancestors. On identifying the individuals concerned, the photographs have been given to their descendants. When these photographs go where they belong, they begin losing their negative traces of exoticism and become a valuable link to our ancestors. The wall of a Sámi home may be decorated with a photograph of a family member from the present or an earlier generation - a photograph that may have once represented "the primitive Sámi" in some European exhibition. But now the same photograph symbolises the fact that we Sámi have always existed - and will go on existing in future. Our ancestors survived colonialism, and so will we. If the Sámi of the past were right to say that a photograph acquires something spiritual from its object, then maybe returning the photograph home also brings back that soul, spirit or energy trace that was once snatched away, giving it peace. The repatriation of a photograph leads to the same kind of healing as the repatriation of any old Sámi object, such as a drum, a skull, or a Sámi woman's horn hat. All in all, we are talking about dealing with the collective traumas of a people, and a healing process.

## Saamelaisen ensimmäinen poliittinen teko on syntyä saamelaiseksi.

The first political act of a Sámi is to be born a Sámi.

#### A modern Sámi saying

As a Sámi, I never live solely in this era. The history of our people is present on every single day of my life, and I and my kind are responsible for our future in the same way as every Sámi generation before us. As a Sámi storyteller, my mission is to engage with the stories that hurt. Working with collective pain is not easy, but I feel that certain tales must be aired publicly; wounds need to be exposed and cleaned so that they can begin to heal. Sámi cinema, like the indigenous film industry in general, seems to focus strongly on history and the past, with the majority population often criticising the Sámi for being stuck in history instead of looking ahead. But collective healing requires us to sift through history and spotlight hidden wrongs. Since the history of the Sámi has been hidden from the majority population of Finland, and from the Sámi themselves, the only way to move forward is to look back. We must see what really happened. Why are we the way we are? Why are we broken as a people, and how could we mend, within the community, the damage done to us by outsiders? A close look at history shows that the Sámi struggle and the fight for land rights, the language, and the identity have continued unchanged for decades. The only thing that has changed is the colonialism practised by the State. Sometimes this has taken the form of the

assimilation policy of boarding schools, while at other times it has manifested as racial research. Oppression is currently concealed in various laws such as the Tana Fisheries Agreement, or in projects such as the Arctic Railway.

The woman whose face I cannot see in the photograph feels colonialism in her body. Maybe, like generations before her and after her, she also fears that there is no future for us Sámi – that the State does not want us to exist. But the woman in the photo does not know that there was nevertheless a future for the Sámi coming after her, and that this is my present. In my mind I liberate the woman from the photograph. I remove her from the research situation and dress her in a slightly worn everyday Sámi dress. The oval is replaced by her face, bearing a beautiful smile. She is in a hurry to feed her children and animals. This prosaic existence is good. There is no need for the woman to play anything, to pose for anyone, and, still, her life and existence are important. And she is free, free.

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# THE LEGACY OF LADJOGAHPIR REMATRIATING SAPMI WITH FOREMOTHERS

Ládjogahpir In the past Sámi women had Ládjogahpir

Then it was determined These Ládjogahpirs´ need to be taken off And thrown into the fire

In the past clergymen considered It resembled the devil's' horn

So Ládjogahpir was lost from Sámi women

Ulla Pirttijärvi<sup>1</sup>

Ládjogahpir Dat Ládjogahpir vel jo Lei dolin Sámenissoniin

De dalle mearridedje Daid Ládjogahpiriid Galggai oaivvis váldit Ja dollii bálkestit

Dolin girkohearráid mielas Dat biročoarvvi muittuhii

De jávkkai Ládjogahpir jo Sámenissoniid oivviin

Ulla Pirttijärvi

<sup>1</sup> This is a *joik* (traditional Sámi single tone vocal music) about the horn hat. The lyrics are by famous Sámi artist Ulla Pirttijärvi and it is from her album *Máttáráhku askái / In our foremothers arms* published in 2002.



Outi Pieski, *Alážis – On the Top*, 2018. Lithograph 68 × 54 cm. Ládjogahpir is a crown-like, graceful headgear that was used by Sámi women until the end of ninetieth century in the Sámi area of what is now Northern Norway and Finland. This hat was prominent by appearance, as it had a high wooden protrusion, *fierra*, at the back of the head. There is a strong narrative, even folklore, in the Sámi society, that the Laestadian priests forbid the use of this hat, since the devil lives in its wooden protrusion. The priests gathered the hats, and like the sacred drums, the hats had to be burned. Nothing was to remain from the old order of the world. As the use and making of the hat came to an end, all the traditional knowledge and symbolism related to it went to oblivion. Today fiftyfive of these hats remain in museum collections in Nordic countries and Europe, but only a few in Sápmi.

In this article we discuss our project called "Máttaráhku ládjogahpir - Foremother's horn hat." Our project is both art and research. The results will be presented in different forms, ranging from a scientific article in a peer reviewed magazine, several smaller articles, and several exhibitions with artworks totally or partly inspired by our project. In addition, we have arranged seminars and taken part in many conferences, where we have shared the information we have gathered to Sámi people. In our work, with research made by Harlin and visual art made by Pieski, the communal knowledges are interlaced with knowledge of the visual arts. From the beginning of our research we dove into archives and literature in order to search for fragments of information, old pictures, written notes, paintings, and articles about the hat, as well as studies about the traditional world view and religion of the Sámi. Our dream and ambition was to dig out secrets of ládjogahpir that were so hidden within and from the Sámi people and from Sámi society. We then travelled from museum to museum. visiting these hats in Nordic countries and Europe.

Later on, we spent many hours together designing, discussing, and pondering upon the aesthetics of the hat, as Pieski made a horn hat to herself with modern methods. This hat was based on her foremothers' hat, that belongs to the collection of the National museum of Finland. Slowly the hat started to lead us to paths that we eagerly followed, towards the hidden histories of Sámi women and the ancestral cosmology, spiritualities, female goddesses, and mother earth. Our research takes part in the discussion concerning intersectional indigenous feminism, which studies how colonialism and racism have shaped and still shapes gendered and social relations, and positions affecting the Sámi women today.

We have arranged workshops to Sámi women where the purpose has been to find collectively a new way to make and signify ládjogahpir. Our workshops can be defined as craftivism, activism that uses handicrafts as medium. Craftivism engages often with non-capitalist practices, environmental issues and feminism. It is essential that the participation shifts from marginalised 'female gatherings' into forms of action that contain cultural, historical and social values, while empowering the makers. In these workshops, Sámi women came together and had broad discussions that ranged from how to make the hat, its aesthetics, actualisation, its history, colonialism, and even its spiritual meanings. During the workshops Harlin interviewed the participants. Through the interviews it became apparent that for many women ládjogahpir is not just a headgear.<sup>2</sup> Many women experienced similar feelings and reactions, even though for them there had never been a possibility to share, debate, or discuss about the hat.

<sup>2</sup> Some younger women saw the hat as one more example of *duodji* and were mainly interested in learning to make it.

It is apparent, that there is something in ládjogahpir that provokes these specific thoughts and feelings in Sámi women. The workshops offered them a possibility to talk about colonialism, gender inequality, religion, traditional knowledge, the role of women and their foremothers. Many Sámi artisans, duojárs, have expressed that Sámi handicrafts, *duodji*, connects individuals with their ancestors and that it/this archival knowledge is empowering, and even helpful in difficult situations. It became apparent that many of these Sámi women were taking back their foremothers' heritage, and simultaneously the hat was receiving a new meaning.

But why was ládjogahpir so hideous that it had to be burned or stopped being used and spoken about? This is quite rare in areas where the Sámi dress and duodii in general, prosper. Sámi dresses and accessories have contained, and still contain, a lot of symbolism relating to traditional worldview, religion and the individual's role in the society, something that can be interpreted inside the community. Many of these symbols have been demonized and forbidden by priests, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. The most efficient destruction of the old ways came with a pietistic Lutheran revival movement. Laestadianism, that spread among the Sámi from 1840 to 1920. The leader of the movement was vicar of Karesuando. Lars Levi Laestadius, who was a Sámi himself and knew the Sámi mythology. Therefore Laestadius could use the images and symbolisms from Sámi heritage and thus syncretise them into the Lutheran religion. It has been said, that this was the big awakening of the Sámi society that also destroyed many element of the old worldview. Sámi Laestadianism took different forms in different areas and times; therefore it also had different impacts on material and non-material culture. In some areas, ornamentations and colours were completely unapproved inside the movement, which attacked the Sámi costumes as they were both colorful and full of symbolism - among them ládiogahpir.

Therefore, silks, silver brooches, and silver belts – which in some cases were traditionally given in dowry chest or *gihligiisa* among the reindeer Sámi society – were strictly prohibited in some areas. In other places, functional decorations had to be reduced and bright colored shoelaces were abandoned and replaced by ones made with dark colors. Something that was common disregarding the location, was that everything that signalized the valuation of the male towards female or demonstrated the skills of female was considered sinful.

The hat ládjogahpir was replaced with a tight bonnet called *jollegahpir*. Jolle means a reindeer that has shed its antlers. Therefore, the change in the structure of the hat reflects the changes in history and in the social positions of Sámi women. The broken relationship between the genders had to do with Christianity in general, where the female sexuality, which the colonizers often saw as licentious, had to be controlled and even forbidden. We suggest that the wooden fierra was a symbol of the social bond between a male and a female, and the making of it was an act of gender equality. The male had the mission to honor a woman with the production of fierra and renewing that bond by the action. When the fierra was cut off and rejected, it was a symbolic act of breaking the equality and balance between them. Traditionally Sámi women were not subaltern to men, but that changed through colonialism and assimilation. When the Laestadian movement begun it was radical, becoming an important factor for cultural community of the Sámi and a counterweight against colonial tactics in the North. Laestadius defended the Sámi ways of life, traditions and language and he saw womanhood as a virtue, even divine. However, the increased contact with the patriarchal Lutheran church led to the colonization of the culture and mind as the heteronormative and patriarchal European culture were forced into Sámi society. New values and meanings shifted especially women's self-understanding as socially inferior, changing the traditional cultural values and practices in Sápmi.



Outi Pieski and Eeva-Kristiina Harlin, Research photo from the project Máttaráhku ládjogahpir – Foremother's Horn Hat, 2018-2019.

We think that ládjogahpir carries a message from the foremothers that live beside us now in the future. This message is simultaneously a message from the past but also from the future to current Sámi society. According to our interpretation ládjogahpir communicates about a gender equal past, about a society that prospered before colonial gender violence brought heteropatriarchy and "civilization" in to Sápmi. Since gender equality in Sámi society was destroyed long ago, it is a miracle to reconstruct it. Gender discrimination has been one of the epicentres of colonial subjugation towards indigenous communities. When European patriarchy was established in Sápmi, women were displaced from their original positions of respect towards an unbalanced society. This is the message that ládiogahpir has given us. There is something special and powerful when women wear this hat. Revitalising this tradition is a step towards decolonization. This practice resonates with our relationship with earth, our mother, and with all the beings to whom we are equal. Even though there is sacredness in all genders, we live in a world where the balance between them has been disturbed, and we must strive to recover its balance.

In North Sámi language, mother is *eadni* and earth is *eana* and these words have a common origin. Like among other Indigenous peoples, the Sámi consider earth to be feminine, sacred and their mother. In the Sámi religion female goddesses dwell in earth, under the terrain of the traditional hut, the *goahti*, and its fireplace, the árran. Sámi folklore narrates about its ancestors, who have hidden treasures in the nature of Sápmi. These narratives tell us, that the treasure is the earth itself! According to Sámi cosmology, under our feet, in earth, there is another world. The inhabitants there look like humans, they are beautiful and dressed up just like the Sámi. They wear Sámi shoes, made of reindeer hide or leather and tin or silver belts, they use a walking stick when they walk, just like the Sámi. They speak Sámi and they practice the same livelihoods as the Sámi people. They instruct how the Sámi should live, dress and act in general. This could be interpreted that all the wisdom and knowledge lives in the earth and there is an obligation to listen to it. This habit has been forgotten and that is why mother earth is struggling and suffering. If we listen she will tell us how to walk our paths, like our ancestors have done before us. When we understand and embrace gender equality again, we will also understand that earth as a female being must be respected. Violence towards women equals with the violence and plundering that we do to earth.

In Sámi traditional cosmology, spirituality was involved in everyday life, not just in certain occasions or places. It was affiliated with everything surrounding an individual, like clothing. In Sámi worldview the past is all the time present but also in the future. One carries responsibility towards the generations behind and ahead. This is the Sámi philosophy and way of life. Ancestors are present in time. "The people before us are always beside us" and even the people from far away in prehistory are present as whispers. Earlier on, the ancestors were a part of the Sámi household living beside them. During the early days of Christianity the missionaries write in their notes that it was painful and difficult for the Sámi to give up the sacrifices and the connection to their ancestors. But the new faith demanded a change and the ancestors were forsaken everywhere where Christianity was enforced, the demonization of sexuality followed and replaced pre-existing gender relations with gender inequity and hierarchical structures. This happened all around the world as a direct influence of colonialism and maybe this is why we and our mother, the earth, suffer.

But let us go back to ládjogahpir, the outstanding hat of the Sámi women. Objects, or rather, belongings as documents of knowledge are an important part of societies that have no long written history by tradition. Belongings carry the traditional knowledge of the ancestors within and therefore are a message that runs from generation to generation. For those who can read the language, they contain encoded knowledges. In this context, cultural belongings are actors that among other things can provide consolation and security. This is why repatriation of cultural heritage has a profound meaning for the Sámi and other indigenous societies. Belongings, that have been stored in museums can be rehabilitated and taken into use again for the future. For Indigenous societies like the Sámi, knowledge has traditionally been passed from generation to generation in the family. The forced assimilation and boarding schools that operated in the Sámi areas during the twentieth century has led to a situation where this knowledge transmission has been disrupted. However, objects can connect us to our ancestors. Through objects that are stored in museums we hear the voice of the foremothers. Emotionally, objects can also transfer to ancestors and repair the cultural emptiness that the centuries lasting, forced assimilation and living by the standards of the majority has caused. This is how duodji connects you to the past generations but also comforts and empowers in difficult situations. Then there it becomes again in the present, like ládjogahpir. A coalition of women who share power, certain world view that has been lost, but the power of the hat is revitalized or rather. rematriated, which in this context means the re-socialisation of cultural belongings in society's settings, where repatriation does not necessarily reach. For indigenous peoples' material culture, in this case ládiogahpir, enables the continuance of heritage despite colonial wounds and objects can have a healing influence. The spiritual meaning of symbolism carried by ládjogahpir, the rehabilitation and revitalization of the object and everything it carries, the knowledge, the symbolism, the emotions signifies rematriation. Return to eana eannážan, mother our earth. This is why we need to take them back home.

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# XARARGE

Roots. Araweelo. There is a bridge that connects this moment to that of the past. The wind is gentle more often than not. Generations walk side by side in different times and dimensions yet aligning through something shared. History. Humanity. Exile. Those who came before the latter ones started building the threads for the bridge. Each generation adds something to it making it stronger. Then came the generation that was in exile. Diaspora. Unable to build on a bridge no longer recognised. Unable to connect the waters and soil that separated them from their past in their present. The bridge grows thinner.

#### Geeljire

Salam, it's a way of greeting people, something you are not accustomed in your time. Xararge was not under arab imperialism back then... I've heard a lot of different stories about you. You existed thousands of years ago. I remember, I was 6 or 7 in Somalia. I was sitting in the back of my parent's car as we were driving home from a weekend with the grandparents in the countryside. Mom was in the driver's seat and Dad was in the passenger's seat. Suddenly, the car stopped somewhere and both of my parents got out of the car. They did not allow me to step out of the car, so I was left with no other choice but to follow everything from the open car window. Dad grabbed few stones from the ground and started throwing them at a grave by the road. I was very confused. Mom plucked flowers off from a tree and put it on the very same grave that Dad threw the stones at.

They both got back in the car and drove off, like nothing happened.. No discussion about what had just happened.. Later that afternoon, I went to Dad who was watering the garden in backyard and I asked him "Why did he throw stones at the grave we drove by?" Dad then started telling me about his version of your story. How horrible you were to the men of your time, all the castration, the torture, the murder, the pain and the suffer you've caused them. The tone of his voice during the story wasn't pleasant.

And then I went to Mom, who was reading a book in the living room. I asked her the same question. "Why did you put flowers on that grave we drove by?" And then Mom started telling me about her version of your story. That you were a true and magnificent leader who fought for women's rights. That you paved the road for the women of your generation and that if it wasn't for you, she wouldn't in this position she's right now...and that made weak ass men hate on her.

Now, I'm still confused about these different versions and don't know which version to believe. If I compare your story to some of the great people after you, both men and women, who have done so much good to bring people together and fight for peace and for equal justice, I wonder if...

#### Caraweelo

Dacartuba marbay malab dhashaa ood muudsataa dhabage, Waxan ahay macaan iyo qadhaadh meel ku wada vaalle. Midiatavda ivo bidixdu waa laba mataanoode. Midi waa martida soora iyo maata daadihise Midina waa mindiyo xiirayiyo mur iyo deebaage Masalooyin talantaalliyaan maandhow leeyahaye Naag majiira keliyuun gabsada hay malayninae Marbaan ahay muddeexad camal san oon maagista aqoone Marna macangag laayaanahoo miiqqan baan ahaye Marbaan ahay muftiga saahidnimo mawlacaw gala'e Marna Mukhawi waashoo xumaha miista baan ahave Marbaan ahay nin xaaraan maqdaxa aan marin jidiinkise

Marna tuug mu'diya baan ahoon maal Rasuul bixinne Marbaan ahay magaam awliyaad magaddinkoodiiye Marna mudanka shaydaanka iyo maal jinbaan ahaye Marbaan ahay murtiyo baanisaba madaxda reeraave Oo ay weliba muuniyo dulgaad igu majeertaane Marna reer magaal Loofaroon muuqan baan ahaye Waxan ahay naag midabbeeya oo maalinbays rogae Muuqaygu gelinkiiba waa muunad goonniyahe Miisaanna ima saari karo nin i maleeyaaye Muslinka iyo gaalada dirkaba waan micna agaane Malaa'iigta naartiyo jannadu waygu murantaaye Naagtii maalmo badan soo jiree madaxu boosaystay Ee naag rag maamuli yigiin waa i maan garanne Naag kastaba halkii kuula mudan ee ay muhato laabtaadu Ee aanad madadaaladeed ugala maarmaynin Iska soo mar waa kuu bannaan marinkad doonta (Axmed Ismaciil Dirive Qaasim)

#### Geeljire

*'Guumaysi iyo gobannimadu ma laba la is garab dhigaa.'* Leaders create the conditions in which they live and carry the responsibility of the consequences. Maybe we look to our female leaders more motherly-nurturing, this softness. We do not have sword-wielding heroine women these days that fight against evil and bad people but we do see women who are mentally, physically and emotionally strong enough to create the conditions in which they live in, which makes them the leaders of their environments. Would you approve this kind of leadership or would you advise them otherwise

#### Caraweelo

Land was inhabited by poets. Poems still flow. This is something foreign. For me. To have two lands and the misfortune of being heartbroken by both. Communities. Belonging. Being part of something. How can one belong to others, without belonging to yourself first. So here you are Trying to build something In which you could recognise yourself. And here, you burn the bridges that connect you To lands that have forsaken vou. So something new can be built. Remember me. And I will remember you.



# EXCERPT FROM JUOLGEVUOÐÐU (SOLE)

Excerpt from the poetry collection Juolgevuođđu (Sole) by Niillas Holmberg. Juolgevuođđu was published by Dat in 2018. English translations by Niillas Holmberg and Annikki Herranen-Tabibi.

## Já, čáppášat don dáid duovdagiid? Giitu giitu!

Eallin lea ovtta jearaldahkii vástideapmi. Jearaldat lea eana

> ja mun buoremus lági miel vástidan EANA.

### So you find this scenery beautiful? Why, thank you!

To live is to answer one question. The question is land

and I to the best of my ability respond LAND. Mun govvidan Eatnama. li mihkkige mu govvit dego Eana.

Ojá, rábmot don gusto iežat duovdagiid maid. Ártet

> in leat goassige geange gullan iežas nie čáppášeamen.

I describe Land. Nothing describes me like Land.

Oh, so your scenery back home is beautiful too? How odd

> more and more often I hear them flattering themselves.

Eana lea deaivil, rehálaš.

Deaivilis jearaldahkii deaivilit dávistivččen muhto joavkoadjektiivamet skierbmu. Nohkan gáma lea giellásiiguin stohppejuvvon.

> Vikkan govahallat ovttas eallima giellásiid haga. Sáhttágo vearálaš olmmoš luohttit Eatnama mearkkaide?

Leatgo mii dahkan eatnamis vearálačča? Diktet mu orrut. Land is incisive, incorruptible.

105

I'd answer sincerely that sincere question but our collective adjective walks lame. The worn out shoe has been patched with tall tales.

Imagine a life thogether without lies.

Can a corrupt person trust the signs of Land?

Have we made Land corrupt? Leave me be. Leatgo mii duođas iežamet bokte gávdnan Eatnama luonddus vearálaš sárgá?

Jos Eana gielista, maidson dat čiegada ja geas?

Soagit rinččagan. Gii dál čiehká luottaid? Mainna ráhput doddjon hárátbátnásiid ja gosa?

Have we truly identified a corrupt line in the character of Land through ourselves?

If Land is lying, what is it hiding and from whom?

Birches are bare. Who shall conceal the traces now? How to rake the broken rake teeth and where to? Excerpt from Juolgevuođđu (Sole)

Dál lea gearretáigi dat áigi go Hamlet jearrá To have or not to have rights.

Duopmár, lávdealbmát ja buorit geahččit mun doarjalan dasa ahte čázi galgá dás duohkoge goivet miehterávdnjái.





#### It is time for trial time for Hamlet to ask, To have or not to have rights.

Your Honor, members of the jury, ladies and gentlemen I plead that water must still be scooped along the stream hereafter. In leat goassige sevnnjoduvvan. Mánnán susttašin sogiid oaksiluvvan álddagasaid ja go mii čiehkádattaimet, moattis mis oainnahalle muittuideametguin čuovggas.

I've never been caught unaware by dusk. As a boy I smelled the branched lightnings of birches and as we played hide and seek, some of us got seen bearing memories of light. Sánehuvvan áhkoš suolggaid heilloda sukkástuolus gihčá dego ákŋu.

> Diehtá maid dahká – juohke sugastemiin fanas suohčá lagabuidda, lagabuidda ...

Muital juoidá, muhto áhkoš lea váiban suotnjá seŋgii dego idjasuoldni mii oktii datge johka.

Dassalan dola ja čohkánan stullui fanas liekkista, ipmil lea vearba.

Niillas Holmberg

A wordless matriarch gently sways in a rocking chair creaking like an oarlock.

> She knows what she's doing – with every stroke the boat floats closer, closer ...

I'd like a story, but she's weary and retires like the night mist separating from the river.

I tend to the fire and sit in the chair the boat warms me, god is a verb.

## ELLOS DEATNU! Long live the river Deatnu!



## INDIGENOUS SÁMI PEOPLE'S Struggle for Self-Determination

The Grand Duchy of Finland, as part of the Russian Empire, was the first European power to grant women the right to vote and run for office in 1907. This was an essential step on the path towards equity in decision-making, yet many steps remain to be taken. Perhaps in a hundred years we will be looking at indigenous peoples' right to self-determination in a somewhat similar way as we now look at women's right to vote: something that was seen as radical a hundred years ago now makes the derogatory way political life was organised seem inexplicable. In contemporary Finland, Sámi people's right to self-determination is reduced to freedom of speech. Non-Sámi politicians and officials make all the crucial decisions regarding the foundations of the Sámi as a distinct people: our lands and livelihoods. In the face of increasing pressure towards our territories and culture, time is of the essence to start taking the necessary steps to fix this injustice.

In a midsummer day 2017, a group of Sámi declared a moratorium on the island of Čearretsuolu in the great river Deatnu (Fin. *Teno*, Nor. *Tana*), making it an area outside the jurisdiction of any state. This was a method of last resort to protect the Sámi people's way of life, under attack by destructive policy-making.<sup>1</sup> Establishing the moratorium was a response to an encroachment done under the veil of conservation; theft in the name of sustainability; colonialism under the mask of science. This was a culmination of the failure by the states of Norway and Finland to respect the Sámi people's right to self-determination. This was the beginning of the Ellos Deatnu movement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Strong restrictions on traditional Sámi fishing in the river Deatnu were imposed by the states of Norway and Finland, despite strong opposition from the Sámi. See more below.

The Deatnu river valley is one of the rare regions in the world where the indigenous Sámi people still are a majority of the population - where the Sámi have managed to resist assimilation. In the past couple of centuries Norwegians, Finns, Swedes and Russians have drawn their state borders through Sápmi (Sámiland; traditional Sámi territories), diminished and dismantled Sámi governing institutions (called Siida in North Sámi) and abolished their legal title to the land. Today Deatnu river forms part of the border between the states of Norway and Finland, both of which have been established in the territory of two peoples: the Norwegians and the Sámi, and the Finns and the Sámi. Two of these peoples, the Finns and the Norwegians, have a state apparatus to serve their interests and consequently to impose the Sámi under their legislative powers. Both of these states have a long history of actively eradicating Sámi culture in their areas through strong assimilation policies. Colonialism is a reality especially for the Sámi engaged in traditional livelihoods, who face various sorts of pressure towards our traditional ways of living on our homeland. The states consider different types of consultation and hearing practices as a way of fulfilling the Sámi right to self-determination, though in reality these are merely ways of providing the Sámi an arena to raise concerns. Leaving Sámi completely outside the actual decision-making regarding our traditional territories and livelihoods is a key principle in the contemporary colonial rule throughout Sápmi. That colonial rule hides behind the many masks of these Nordic liberal democratic welfare states. Though undeniably these states are in many ways very good places to live, on the other hand they employ policies towards the Sámi that can be referred to as cultural genocide.

Deatnu is the most diverse and one of the most abundant Atlantic salmon rivers in the world. Salmon is the main reason why the Sámi people inhabited Deatnu valley in the first place and still today salmon is the most important genetic resource of this sub-Arctic region. I have fished salmon all my life. It is largely because of salmon that I have the connection I have to Deatnu and to the Sámi way of life, and it is because of that connection that I am who I am. The Sámi people of Deatnu valley are who we are because of salmon. Deatnuis what it is because of the Sámi and their link to the salmon. All indigenous people are indigenous to a certain place, and it is that place and the people's connections in that place that makes them indigenous. Salmon provides us with at least some level of economic security, which is ultimately a prerequisite for self-determination. In Sámi cosmology, as in many other indigenous cosmologies, humans are not separate from nature, which further explains the connectedness to a place: people are a part of the ecosystem. Denying indigenous people the right to be part of their ecosystems is denying their indigeneity and therefore denying their existence as indigenous people.

Despite strong opposition from the Sámi, in 2017 the parliaments of Norway and Finland approved new fishing regulations to the river Deatnu, which removed on estimate 80 percent of Sámi fishing rights. It should not come as a surprise that this is devastating for the salmon fishing Sámi. The state authorities tell us that they are doing this for our own good, they are protecting the salmon for us – from us. They take it for granted that we do not know what is good for us. The arrogance is unfathomable, yet perfectly accepted by the states that stubbornly hold on to this patronising role towards the Sámi.

Though with every new fishing regulations to Deatnu, Sámi fishing has been restricted, the extent of the restrictions imposed this time was unprecedented. The new regulations make it impossible to transfer certain traditional fishing methods to future generations. This threatens the very continuation of the knowledge needed to sustain oneself in this harsh climate, where you must know how to use the resources available, as farming is not really an option. Though the restrictions were done in the name of conservation, the state authorities simultaneously granted new fishing rights to non-indigenous holiday home owners. The message from the states is that it is important to protect the salmon, but it is also important to strengthen Finnish property owners' position in the Deatnu valley. Surely the Sámi can tip in.

It is unthinkable for me to spend a summer next to this great salmon river – a place I also call home – and not to fish salmon. Now for two summers I've been looking over my shoulder for the fishing patrol whose task it is to catch people like me, who fish without a licence. Since 2017 it has been impossible for non-resident Sámi – like students such as myself – to obtain a license for traditional salmon fishing in the river Deatnu. This means that if we want to maintain that connection that salmon fishing embodies, we must break the law.

As a response to this attack against our people, Ellos Deatnu established a moratorium in Čearretsuolu to protect our viability. A moratorium means the suspension of a law, activity or process within a certain area. A moratorium has rules that must be observed while it is in force. Establishing a moratorium is a way of enforcing the right and responsibility that the Sámi have towards the salmon. A moratorium can be declared against an external threat, and in this context the purpose of a moratorium is to help local communities to live in accordance with their traditions to protect the balance of nature. With these thoughts in mind, Ellos Deatnu movement set camp to the island Čearretsuolu and stayed there the whole summer of 2017, maintaining the moratorium.

Soon after declaring the moratorium Ellos Deatnu organised a community meeting in Ohcejohka. The purpose of the meeting was to explain what the moratorium is and what is its purpose, and to hear the views of the community. The fact that the new fishing regulations impact the whole community was shown in the amount of people joining this gathering: the meeting room in the old school building was full of people from both sides of the state border. In the meeting, people decided to produce a statement and to collect signatures to it. In that statement we wrote that Deatnu watershed belongs to the Sámi, who have the right and the responsibility to care for and govern it, and the states have no rightful claims to Deatnu and their authority is rejected. The statement gathered 200 signatures.

The harsh restrictions to Sámi fishing were justified by the state authorities by ecological arguments: certain salmon stocks of the watershed have declined, so the salmon must be protected. Even if we agree on this, however, it is absurd to claim that Sámi rights and sustainability would be contradictory. Sustainable use of salmon is the foundation of the Sámi culture of Deatnu valley, as that is a prerequisite to maintaining a practice over centuries. Now, clearly, fishing practices change over time due to development in equipment and the aim here is not to oversimplify the complex issue of conservation of fish stocks, but to point us towards the main point: Though the state authorities will claim otherwise, this is not a debate over the conservation of salmon. Ultimately this is a debate over the Sámi right to self-determination.

The responsibility to take care of the river is an important principle of the Ellos Deatnu movement. The Sámi are the most dependent on the salmon, and the Sámi have the right and the responsibility to decide how to protect our salmon stocks. The Sámi and our ancestors have fished salmon in Deatnu for millennia and acquired a vast body of knowledge on the ecosystem. The research done on the salmon to inform the state authorities includes just some bits of this traditional knowledge. It is common for Sámi fishers – who have spent all their lives on the river – to disagree with claims of fish biologists. It is clear that people of the Deatnu valley are not satisfied with the way states are governing fishing. The fact that 95 percent of the salmon rivers in Finland have lost their salmon does not exactly bring confidence to the way the Finnish state manages salmon rivers. In fact, the only two rivers in Finland with salmon that is suitable for humans to eat daily, are in Sámi territory. This is not a coincidence. The link between the Sámi and salmon is inextricable.

The Ellos Deatnu movement approached the responsible ministries of Norway and Finland with a letter, informing them of the moratorium and making certain demands. The movement wrote that the states have never provided any legal proof of their jurisdiction in this traditional Sámi area. The Sámi are the traditional custodians of Deatnu and have the right - by international law - to use and govern their traditional territories and resources. The movement demanded the states provide an explanation on the legal basis of their jurisdiction in Deatnu. This legal proof has still not been provided, most likely because it does not exist. In the absence of this legal basis, the state rule in Deatnu is considered illegal under international law. In the letter the movement demanded that new fishing regulations be negotiated immediately to Deatnu with the leadership of the local Sámi. Until this is done, the new fishing regulations will not be in force in the area around Čearretsuolu, where fishing is governed instead by Sámi customary law and practices.

More than 30,000 daily tourist licenses were sold annually to Deatnu before the new restrictions, which also brought stronger restrictions on tourist fishing. While tourism is important for many Sámi families, tourist fishing creates additional fishing pressure. The moratorium declaration underlines that the moratorium is a stateless area. Therefore, sports fishing licenses sold by the state authorities are not in force inside the moratorium and tourist fishers must ask permission from the Sámi of the area to fish inside the moratorium. Some tourists have asked for permission, while many have not. The movement argues that this is not a radical thing to ask for, but merely a matter of common decency: should not everyone ask from local people how they feel about your actions in a place you are visiting?

The climax of the summer of 2017 was the support concert Ellos Deatnu organised, where many well-known Sámi artists came to perform and support the struggle for Sámi rights. Also performing at the concert was Paleface, one of the biggest names of Finnish hip hop. The goal of the concert was to raise awareness to the Deatnu case and to gather funds for the future work on Sámi rights on the Deatnu river. The concert received more than 700 guests, which makes it the biggest event ever to happen in Ohcejohka, a village of 500 people. Towards the late hours of this mini-festival, hundreds of people were shouting "Ellos Deatnu! Ellos Deatnu!"

Ellos Deatnu called for other communities in the river valley to declare their own moratoriums in order to sustain the Sámi way of life. This call was answered by the establishment of the Allasuolu moratorium near the village of Dálvadas, which also declared and area where the new fishing regulations are not in force. Both moratoriums remain to be in force while we head towards the fishing season of 2019. In 2018 the moratorium movement extended outside the Deatnu region, when three Sámi villages and one reindeer-herding district declared a huge moratorium on their traditional grazing grounds in Nása, at the border area between Sweden and Norway. This moratorium was declared against mining and other forms of land-use that would disturb reindeer herding. Other Sámi communities have made similar demands regarding their areas, while they have not called them moratoriums.

In 2018 artists and activists Jenni Laiti, Niillas Holmberg and Outi Pieski of the Ellos Deatnu movement established a *Moratorium Office*, with the purpose of providing "Solutions for ending colonial power." On their website moratoriadoaimmahat.org they write: "Is colonialism causing you problems? Does some anonymous official decide how your land should be used? Is some stranger ruling over your native lands and fishing waters? Are you forced to pay unreasonable maintenance and use fees to the government for using your own land? Don't worry! We have a solution to your troubles: a moratorium!" The Moratorium office provides an easy-to-use moratorium kit as well as advisory services for establishing a moratorium. This kind of moratorium is a decolonising tool and an act of restorative justice where the community takes back their right to govern their resources. From the state's perspective this might be illegal, but then again, from the indigenous people's perspective state authority in indigenous lands is equally illegal.

In the summer of 2017 five Sámi individuals from the Deatnu region reported themselves to the police while fishing like their ancestors have done since time immemorial - an act that had all of a sudden become a crime. They were fishing in traditional waters of their families in tributary rivers with healthy salmon populations, so the ecological arguments for restricting their fishing are not valid. Their goal is to challenge the way Finland governs fishing in Sámi waters and to fight for legal protection for the Sámi way of life. They are prepared to take their cases all the way to international courts. This is the first time in Finland when a trial of criminal law is based on the right to practice Sámi culture. The district court gave their ruling on March 2019 and found all the accused not guilty, stating that the Sámi have the right to practice their culture and that their fishing had not harmed the salmon stocks. Though this is a historical victory for the Sámi, the prosecutor has appealed and the case will go to the highest court. Updates on the case and the fundraiser to support the campaign can be found at samihumanrights.org.

Ellos Deatnu grounds their arguments in international law. The movement states that the Sámi as the original inhabitants of Deatnu valley have the right to decide how to use the resources of the area. A core principle of the contemporary human rights system is that all peoples are equal, and all peoples have the right to self-determination. This right belongs also to indigenous peoples, as endorsed by the UN General Assembly in 2007 with the adoption of the milestone UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. A leading scholar of his field, Sámi professor Mattias Åhren argues in his recent book *Indigenous Peoples' Status in the International Legal System* published by the Oxford University Press: "under the right to self-determination, there must – by definition – be examples when the will of the state has to yield to that of the indigenous people in cases of conflict." As none of the states that have colonised Sápmi recognise this right to the Sámi, it is undebatable that the Sámi right to self-determination is offended by all the states that occupy Sápmi.

Deep down Ellos Deatnu is far from being a new phenomenon. On the contrary, Ellos Deatnu should be seen as part of the continuum of the long-standing struggle for Sámi self-determination and the right to live one's culture. Throughout Sápmi, Sámi ways of life are under pressure due to competing interests of the majority society. Sámi history is full of struggles where encroachments have been done in the name of development. Green colonialism is a term used to refer to encroachments done on indigenous territories in the name of "green" development - all too common in Sápmi. From the Áltá case, when a Sámi village was nearly drowned to provide hydropower, to Vuohčču, where many Sámi villages were drowned. More recent conflicts include cases such as the massive windmill farm under construction in Foysen (Nor. Fosen), where Norway openly disregards the request from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to stop building windmills on Sámi grazing lands. The forestry dispute in Aanaar is a case where the State parks and forests enterprise (Fin. Metsähallitus) has cut Sámi forests that are essential for the reindeer for finding food, thus endangering the continuation of reindeer herding in the region.

Many more development projects are planned on Sámi territories without Sámi consent. The Norwegian Environment Agency (Nor. Miljødirektoratet) recently granted the mining company Nussir ASA a permission to dump mining waste in the Sámi fjord Riehpovuotna. The leader of Friends of the Earth Norway has described this as one of the most environmentally damaging industrial projects in Norwegian history. A huge windmill park is planned in sacred Rástegáisá region, which would take a massive area away from traditional Sámi use. The planned Arctic Corridor railway would cut through the whole North Sápmi, fragmenting the pastures of countless reindeer herding families. The president of the Sámi parliament of Finland Tiina Sanila-Aikio has described the planned railway as "the end of the Sámi people." The list could go on and on. Though each of these cases has its specific characteristics, the common factor is that Sámi interests are undermined in the name of development. What they call development means regression for the Sámi.

A classic counter-argument to justify these kinds of encroachments is, "Aren't you using mobile phones, computers, cars and snowmobiles too?" The answer is ves. However, this argument fails to take into account a couple of things: first, huge amounts of various minerals have already been dug out of Sámi lands - usually without consent - which would fulfil Sámi needs many times over. Second, though it is clear that more renewable energy is needed, the planned renewable energy production in the north of Sápmi would not be for local use, but to satisfy the energy needs of the south. These arguments are also missing the main point: development isn't magic, it consists of human actions aiming to improve the livingstandards of some. If such actions cause negative impacts, people have the right to decline such actions in their homelands or demand appropriate compensation. Currently this is not the case in Sápmi, where in many cases the Sámi have basically just the right to give

statements and wait for what is to happen. Taking cases into court seems often to be the only, expensive, way to fight encroachments. It is as if Sápmi is seen as an "empty" place waiting to be taken and used. This approach fails to see that these areas are in use, as they have been since time immemorial. Sápmi does not exist solely to satisfy the needs of others. Sápmi is our home, and without our land we cannot survive.

In Sámi elders I see a strong urge which drives them to hunt, to fish, to gather. It seems to be more like a drive than a conscious decision to act. A basic instinct of survival. Their generation learned that nobody is going to feed them. So, if you want to eat, you better learn how to go and get some food. As things are now, one would not starve to death in a Nordic welfare state. However, not being fully dependant on that system - which is essentially foreign to us as indigenous people - is a matter of self-esteem and precaution. Trust that the earth will provide us seems to come as a built-in feature for people who grow up dependent on their respective environment. Trusting that a welfare state will provide us is a more complex issue - a state that casts both its protective and coercive nets around its citizens. Like trusting a man who first hits you and then promises to feed you.

To return to the comparison in the beginning of this text, it is clear that the issue of fulfilling indigenous peoples' right to self-determination is of a different nature than that of granting women the right to vote. The main parallel is that both are matters of fundamental importance in creating a healthy democracy which does not serve to empower certain groups over others. The question is not one merely deciding a yes or no question, but of finding out the extent of the indigenous peoples right to selfdetermination in various levels of decision-making. Since in many areas there are overlapping rights and interests of different peoples, one element of the right to self-determination is negotiating. However, currently the so-called negotiations with the Sámi are generally merely a hearing process, an arena to raise concerns, while the state representatives make the final call on crucial issues for the Sámi. To repeat, the Sámi people's right to self-determination is reduced to providing an arena to practice the freedom of speech. The right to self-determination is more than negotiating from an unequal power-position. A fundamental aspect of the right to self-determination is the right to decide over certain things, even if the state does not agree.

The states throughout Sápmi have weak legal ground for governing traditional Sámi territories used by the Sámi since time immemorial - and in many cases they are not doing too good job at it. State jurisdiction in Sápmi is based on a racist ideology which claims that these were empty lands (Terra nullius) of roaming heathens, just waiting to be taken under "proper" rule and use by Christian farming peoples. Now these lands are under increasing threat due to the ever-growing needs of the mighty beast that has become more holy than the forces of nature: the global market. This beast has the ideology of a cancer cell: growth is the most important thing, even if it kills us. And, sadly, it just might. Mankind is at the brink of the existential threat of climate change. The Arctic is changing especially rapidly. and the ecosystems are trying to adapt. We need all the tools available to restrict that change and to prepare for it.

There is comprehensive evidence<sup>2</sup> that conservation sites where local people are directly engaged and benefit from the conservation efforts are more effective with respect to both biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See J.A. Oldekop et al., "A global assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas," *Conservation Biology* 30, no. 1 (2015): 133-141.

Vast areas of Sápmi, protected by Sámi customary use and guardianship, remain to be some of the most pristine environments on this planet. Recognising the legal title of the Sámi *Siida's* to their territories and enforcing conservation and adaptation strategies built around traditional practices would be the most effective way to protect Sápmi and the Sámi. In Deatnu the Sámi depend on salmon, as salmon is part of us. The Sámi, as the rightful custodians of Deatnu, should have a say on how to best protect our ecosystem that is our home and that keeps us alive. Let us live, let Deatnu live. Ellos Deatnu!

DAVID MUÑOZ-ALCÁNTARA



### Revelación rima con revolución.

No es el milagro sino la revelación, no hay historia sin revolución.

La disputa por la historia y la memoria, es también la disputa por la verdad y la vida.

> El primer paso a la libertad es un acto de resistencia —*Resistencia física, resistencia violenta* Angela Davis

La maratón histórica arranca – vidas, verdades, verdades por vidas y vidas por verdades... sangre, sudor, y valor se pasan de mano en mano como estafetas (y si preguntas ¿quién las trae? todos se engarrotan). El chivato suena para anunciar que por el carril derecho corren los que quieren ocultar la verdad para capitalizar la vida; por el carril izquierdo los que la quieren revelar verdad y rebelar la vida (de revelación y de rebeldía); al centro los que pretenden moderar la verdad para gobernar la vida; y entre carriles – de tanto en tanto – camisetas se intercambian para mantener dentro del margen colonial el ritmo de la carrera. Las huellas de los corredores van descubriendo a su paso la imagen de un fascismo camuflado de democracia... el polvo de la confusión populista sube v entre la obstrucción de ambas - vida v verdad - se toman las apuestas... la estadística reporta que los muertos están en aumento, el estado cubre las espaldas de los que los niegan, desaparecen - verdad y vida. La carrera no va a parar, pero en las actas los jueces va declararon que el capitalismo va primero – a punta de pistola. ¡La multitud grita! ¿De dolor, de miedo, de hastío, de denuncia, de rabia, de lucha? En el estadio las pantallas anuncian y venden pastillas contra la depresión; las pancartas denuncian la represión, que tampoco se cura con pastillas, y que ni la verdad ni vida se venden... se defienden. Los muros se alzan, metrallas se reparten para detener las voces que se revelan. El eco histórico resuena, recurrente, inconseguente para quien manda al milico a contener: se buscan defensores sociales, defensores de la vida, defensores de la verdad, de la libertad y de lo que es comunal; para darles trabajo de mártires de guerra, la paga va saben, 42 gramos de plomo en la cabeza.

Cuatro palos clavados al piso marcan el perímetro de otra fosa donde te seguiré buscando. La sombra sigue girando, marcando el tiempo.

Quisieron enterrarnos sin saber que somos semilla.

El ocote retoñó allí donde tu cuerpo desvaneció. De allí prendemos una rama seca cuando la luna es nueva, para vernos a los ojos y acordarnos, para que nuestro muertos no mueran dos veces. Un cocobolo crece donde tu cuerpo yace. De una rama me hice un bastón para acompañarme, para apoyarme, para abrir camino, para tocar más lejos, bajar los frutos, sembrar semillas, entonar ritmos, señalar espacios, leer el sol, mezclar conjuros, dibujar en la arena, y defender la vida.

Seguiremos, resistiremos.

#### Frequently Unsolved Questions

# A resumed theory for collective non-compliance

Present, or to whom otherwise might concern. Can history belong?

 Perhaps its been quoted plenty, yet Audre Lorde's proposition locates a crucial standpoint from where to start walking across this question. As "there is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we don't live single-issue lives."<sup>1</sup> There is neither a universalizing nor generalizing entry for signifying struggle, as it affects us simultaneously yet differently. And as it happens, its pluralizing effects do extend despite all imperialist efforts to subsume or restrain the experience of struggle from its possibility to become a collectivized manifestation of our radical interdependencies. The strive for memory and justice is also strive for history without subjects.

> <sup>1</sup> Audre Lorde, "Learning from the 60s," in Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 2007), 138.

The foregrounding of historicity proves that the poesis of revolutionary transformation is latent and actual at the same time. *I am We*, walking in spirals through a Zapatista slogan which reminds us that everyone is us and everyone is not us, that despite the distance we move[s] (*sic.* as singular/plural) together. As stated: "nothing for us, everything for everyone!"<sup>2</sup>

2 The tide of populism rises with the aid of post modern currents claiming the end of history. Throughout agonistic discourses, signs of fascism float near the surface. If by confronting the spread of fascism our dead ones have died once, we won't let them die again. We will hold a deep breath and swim against that tide until reaching the bottom. Once there, we will lav a stick to the ground, hold it strongly to resist the currents. We will study the forms emerging on the sand; we will read all signs against the grain. We will use all means to draw lines; to help us orientate; to dig deeper into the meanings of our actions. While moving the grounds we might find some conch shells [caracoles], we will listen carefully to its chants, learn its sounds, become the spiral where another world is possible. From below, "we will reconstruct the path of life, that which those from above have broken and continue breaking."3

3. It is important to distinguish populism from popular struggle, with acute attention for producing ruth-less and rigorous social critique (including self-critique) in

<sup>2</sup> CCRI-CG del EZLN. *Para todos todo, nada para nosotros.* From the southeast Mexican mountains; June 10th, 1994.

<sup>3</sup> S.I. Galeano, (2014). *Between Light and Shadow*. In La Realidad [Reality], Planet Earth; May 2014.

order to oppose any opportunist obfuscation in their antagonism. In the arts this distinction follows the insistency and continuation of an inherited response: for "the politicization of art against the aesthetization of politics." as stated by Walter Benjamin. In practice, populism in arts actualizes the tradition of idealism by individualizing the subjectivity of aesthetics into the confinements of identity; and by secluding artistic work into an aseptic arena of mere opinions, cultural representations, entertaining experiences, and unique-empty descriptions. These are followed by an insatiable takeover of mercantile speculation overshadowing the urgencies that art can trigger. Yet, the possible transformation that work (including art) engages as an unfinished social process relies on ones degree of engagement towards the recognition of work as site of political exercise, and the understanding of its capacity to potentially transgress the reproduction of ideology.

The event in art – as non-fully conceptualized form of truth, testimony of work, and latency of a different reality – tends to be institutionally nullified by alienating its site of action and conflict. Surrounded by mere justifications and descriptions of what the work might aim for, it becomes inoperable. Art away from its social function becomes the suspension of desire, yet it is displayed as a completed artifact, the still life of an illustrated intention. The bell glass that separates art and ideology must be fractured in theory and in practice, for art to hammer a different form of doing and knowing as Alberto Híjar Serrano signaled with the necessity to "collectivize or die."<sup>4</sup> More on, popular struggle demands the collectivization of every dimension as plural organizing processes, for it to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Hijar A. Serrano, Agruparse o morir. México en la Bienal de París., El Gallo Ilustrado supplement for El Dia, no. 786, July 17, 1977.

avoid falling into populist instrumentality. In the arts – as site of politics in the sensible and in the imagination –, the demands for collectivization should move with the recognition of its impossible dissociation from class struggle. In order to annul determinisms, nihilisms, and essentialisms, art should "merge, articulate, and bind, with popular struggle by every mean possible."<sup>5</sup>

4 The struggle for self-determination must not be confused with a new nationalist program. As stated above, people's self-determination is and should be a revolutionary claim, and not a reformist one. A broad trans-territorial articulation of revolutionary struggle and an organized yet discontinuous collective non-compliant force is necessary. To stop the new wave of global policing security organisms - which incorporate national armies and police as compradors -, that protect the capitalist hydra and its spreading wall referred as "law and progress" by the neoliberal polis. The revolutionary means should be read beyond armed mobilized forces in the quest for justice, reparation, and against oppressive-violence in order to expand with the sense of revolution as the collective construction of differences in everyday actions. Much is still to be learned, documented, reflected, and studied from the intersections, influences and missed encounters manifested at everyday moments of popular struggle as sites for the emergence of public truth, specially for discerning these from the populist instrumentality and obfuscatory use of information. Education is the heart of revolutionary transformation.

5. Art as class struggle engaged through processes of signification, turns into a necessity the exchange and documentation of practices and learnings from revolutionary perspectives that move beyond individualisms. populisms, state and market manipulations. An active engagement and critique within and across forms of articulation, production, and distribution of arts is also to be transformed into a process of their collectivization. In order to move away from tendencies of determinism, hybridity, and perspectivism which reproduce social inertia in checkpoints of culture (such as biennials, triennials, world fairs, etc.) as financial instruments to promote and sustain a culture of domination. Special attention should be directed to differentiate, unveil, and conflict every ideological compliancy within revolutionary forms. To remain aware of the contradictions that history has proven, as forms of avant-garde, solidarity, mobilization and resistance risk also to reproduce pessimism, discrimination, and in must deplorable cases authoritarianism, coloniality, and fascism.

6. The instauration of taste as disciplined habitus, energizes the smooth articulation of capitalist ideology and its veins of idealism in the arts. Through the normalisation of taste, coloniality naturalizes itself as condition of lived realities. Therefore, art needs to constantly overpower the conformism that excise it from engagement in political critique and revolutionary praxis in order to transform the conventional interpretations of everyday aesthetic experience. As Esther Leslie underlines, overpowering conformism is "to overpower the conformity of reformist theory and practice."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Leslie Esther, "Preface: An Accumulation of Technological Means," in *Walter Benjamin. Overpowering Conformism* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), vii-xiv.

The emphasis in the struggle for self-determination is to declare a full stop to "business as usual" where the claim for autonomy does not aims for an identitary reaffirmation. In other words, self-determination and self-organization as a program to eliminate the metaphysical pillars of capitalism, including its operative reliance on state and nationalism!<sup>7</sup>

A remarked exercise of critique resurface as a "punch of truth"<sup>8</sup> – quoting Alain Badiou – for reality to be measured according to its social dimension. Art as a subversive process can activate new forms of presence, yet for the quest of overpowering conformity, artists' political awareness should delve into its revolutionary potential as a publicsitefor collective experimentation, self-knowledge, self-critique, and socialization as strategies to fracture its subsumption. The autonomy of art shall not be confused with the privilege of artistry; as Marcuse stated, "the class character of art consist only in objective limitations of its autonomy."<sup>9</sup>

Collective work implies a sociality of knowledge and therefore a constant questioning of means and meanings. The technical capacity of revolutionary poetics is to "keep open the crack in the wall"<sup>10</sup> by expanding the trajectories of theoretical and practical insurrections. Technology as a device of knowledge must place its collective-public character as the center of gravitation, if it aims for real democratization beyond mere representation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> As we have learned, the concept of nation is instrumental for the state to reinforce its coloniality.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Alain Badiou, Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil (London: Verso, 2001), 43-50.

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Marcuse Herbert. The Aesthetic Dimension. Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1978), 18-19.
<sup>10</sup> EZLN ed. (2016). Pensamiento Crítico Frente a la Hidra Cap-

italista I. Participación de la Comisión Sexta del EZLN. Chiapas: Ediciones Mexicanas, CIDECI, 2016.

Non-partisan militancy and the never ending work that it demands for articulating collectively should not be seen as moments of definition, but as registers of advancement in the intersection of social needs and material realities – in other words, for the abolition of class divisions including genderization, racialization, and ownership. The constant engagement to strive in organic re-signification shows that "personal is political!" And that liberation is not a destination, it is a route.

As Cabral's speech The weapon of theory reminds 7. us through a proverb "no matter how hot the water from your well, it will not cook your rice." There is work to be done to transform the word, and nothing achieved is to be taken for granted. Invoking Lefebvre's famous statement regarding the "production of space," it is relevant to add that if there is a "politics of space because space is political," there is also a politics of possibility. To imagine the impossible in rejection to the commonsensical thesis that signals "the possible side of utopia as the path of realization." The proposition of revolutionary utopia is that of the impossible(s). The dreams of those who know that struggle has no beginning nor ending; that the paths are wretched in cycles and vortexes; that walking implies a redrawing of times, encounters, missed encounters despite measurements of possibility, materiality, and existence; that walking is for keeping distance from ideals, and moving towards the concrete analysis of concrete situations; to reimagine home: to move towards what will become: towards the moment when the road changes by changing us into the road. As CIG has stated: "We are here to speak of the impossible, since of the possible has been spoken plenty."

## SPECULATIVE Ontology

PRESENCE ABOLITION The lesson of science is not about certainty, it is about precariousness – the precariousness of what we consider to be the external world, outside of us, and about which quantam mechanics, for example, has taught us; the precariousness of the mental structures and categories through which we endeavour to know the world... This is probably the ultimate message: in a laboratory, science transmutes itself into poetry.<sup>1</sup>

> <sup>1</sup> Souleymane Bachir Diagne, "In the Den of the Alchemist," in *Chronic Books: Supplement to the CHIMURENGA CHRONIC*, 13, (Kalakuta Trust: Cape Town, 2018), 13.

What is it that happens in the break between Elvin Jones and Rashied Ali? What is it that is there in Rashied that was present in Elvin swinging although still within time as it were? What I think we hear in Elvin swinging at his best, on top of feeling the eternal motion that he channels, is a series of creshendic and free rhythmic melodic harmonic explosions articulating the micro and macro shape of the music. Participatory and deeply engaged in complex conversations. Neither wholly abstracted from the form, or framework, of the tune and also neither subordinated to, dominated by, or dependent on it, always pushing against and suggesting beyond it.

What we hear in Rashied is another series of creshendic and free rhythmic melodic harmonic explosions articulating the shape of the music. The dialectic of freedom in the music (the unity of form and performance) has been pushed further out and is resolving on another level such that the frameworks containing it are under continual threat. The Notion running hardest from the threat is itself Time.

Is Rashied still in time? Regardless of being on time, Rashied was as much in time as any historical actor. Sunny. Milford. Louis. Makaya: Produced by and producing time. By articulating and elaborating and destroying the notion itself. Time. But always making and playing time. Perhaps not in time, conventionally. But neither late nor early.

However still swinging.

Rashied's time is self-referential. Defined by itself and located in its own definition. The manipulation and stretching and re-voicing of his concepts becomes the temporal notion itself. The referent for time. Beyond measure and destructive of the bar, even beside pulse, stretching Coltrane's search beyond the temporal limits of constraint. Eternality. Swing.

We hear and feel this through Elvin as a pioneer of certain kinds of conversations in the music. Discussions he is having across the various elements of his multiple instrument which are perhaps a percussive parallel to the Coltranic multiphonics. Perhaps the only method that would simultaneously propel the tenor deeper into himself, further outto the cosmic and the ensemble to a higher together.

Rashied Ali swings.

Now John Coltrane was, we know, the innovator of the horn, but he had to have a rhythm. Everybody has to have a different kind of rhythm to make that different kind of sound on the horn to get over, so consequently, Elvin Jones had to play a very free type of drumming to play with the kind of music that Trane was playing. In other words, when Bird was playing, there had to be a Max Roach around to cope with that style, to make it move. If the rhythm ain't correct, then the group's not happening.<sup>2</sup>

There are clear moments when one hears the ways in which Ali picks up from Elvin. Elvin is constantly threatening the Notion of time being kept. At his furthest out temporal reaches: There are passages on *Live in Seattle* where he sounds as if he is searching for a different category of measure, a new unbarred disposition of time. The duo he plays with Coltrane in "Vigil" which appears on *Kulu Se Mama* is a clue as to where the music might go – a clue which Ali takes up and extends in his series of duets with Coltrane later on *Interstellar Space* and elsewhere.

Elvin's tradition, like many others' – Ali's included - is the let's really do something together kind of a thing.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Rashied Ali quoted in Val Wilmer, As serious as your life: Black music and the free jazz revolution 1957-1977, (London: Serpent's Tail, 2018), 210.

Marx and Engels, racists, called "communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things."

### PRESENTLY-TIMED INTERLUDE

I remember in our high school plays, inevitably someone would forget their lines. That would introduce the conditions for the most interesting made-up passages and acts. The conditions necessitating creative moves on the moment and the possibility of something new.

One of my sisters and a friend of theirs used to play a game in the swimming pool. One would be a dolphin, the other a marine biologist. The game would change within some vague, shifting parameters of how a dolphin relates to a scientist involving various circumstances of rescue. Some high-level improvisation: proper shape-shifting shit! Beyond contradiction between different forms of life. Now I'm a dolphin. Now the air. Ah, now I'm a bus driver, now I am science. Next I'm the bus. Now a father. Ah, now I'm a snake.

To improvise is to temporarily improve on the momentary. To act think and feel beyond the moment whilst unapologetically occupying the present even as you stretch and extend that which time is willing and accustomed to be. That which it is capable to be. It is asking the question of ontology to Time themselves (by most accounts a multiple being). Questing to transcend the "moment" as a possible temporal location. To be out of reach of the "moment" as a fixed and identifiable temporality. Perhaps to transcend "moment" or even the "present" (it)self. Is there self beyond time? Eradicate the epistemic possibility of momentary presentness to be beyond the current conditions of the moment, escape its materiality in the LEAP toward that which is next. To be uncapturable by the moment, to live beyond it and its clutches as it grasps for you in order to pin you to itself. The refusal to be a badge on the blazer of Time.

To refuse Time its trophies. Skip and skip past Time. Leave it in the mire. Occupy the dream in waking life. Refusing to wait for life to sort itself out. Outside of the rational. On the out sides of contradiction. Is there a self beyond time? It is so future we don't have categories for it yet. The ultimate dialectical encounter: the categories are so perpetually in motion, Understanding is eluded. Albert Ayler is playing the sound of what is to come after the war. While the war is enduring, still very much during here. Outhere the categories of existence are still up for grabs. Who swings hardest furtherest out.

A mundane practice of the everyday, a certain type of subjectivity, somewhere between materialism and idealism organisation and spontaneity escaping dogma precluding an enactment of its own moves on the cusp of itself and something slightly later falling aside the present slipping through moment falling out of presence in the rub in the crack in the absence splinching time taking flight tightening the betweens in the midst inhabiting the opposite disunities of time in the crevices of the momentary if not yet eradicated resolved unresolved content to be unfolding and irresolvable still re-solving the puzzle that was still there where you found it in a few minutes after the fact is called into question when was the fact when was your response to the answer prior to its being posed if swing is the answer then what is the quest if improvisation is the attempt to respond the third might eclipse its initial.

## NEITHER LATE

Communism is the necessary form and the dynamic principle of the immediate future.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx, Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844, (Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1959), 43.

<sup>4</sup> C.L.R. James, Notes on dialectics: Hegel ~ Marx ~ Lenin, (Allison & Busby: London, 1980), 93.

<sup>5</sup> Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The soul at work: From alienation to autonomy*, (Semiotext(e): Los Angeles), 221.

Before I start, a few considerations. Improvisation is something done together (indeed it is a mode of (being) together. Unstable and incomplete). That is also to say that ontology is something we do together. Our quest in existing and the question of our existence is a collective practice for which the only method is so immediately present it is almost in the fleeting future for whom the movement is since the self got lost in the belief of a moment. It's about getting at something which is or appears not quite obtainable within the confines of Time – the given conditions of a particular historical moment. Is it a method.

CLR got that Lenin somehow got this.

Free creative activity can only come into existence when it is faced with something that only free creative activity and free activity alone can overcome. That is part of the transition to a higher stage of existence.<sup>4</sup>

The objective of the revolution is to liberate and encourage free creative activity (of the proletariat). Workers to collectively organise their own shit. Workers to do their own ontology. To own our own ontology is inherently a practice of getting together to own it, and, by extension, nothing, by doing togetherness. And since "[a]utonomy is also a process without end"<sup>5</sup> the score is missing and the chart is slightly misleading since the other side of what is written, when the notes run out, is really when you are on your own wits and the cats start cooking. The chart has no script for unthinkability.

THE NEGATION OF NEGATION I'm trying to get as many sounds as I can out of the instrument, and if I'm playing with somebody, then I just try to take them to heights that would really get the best out of them... I sure be trying to get next to whoever I'm playing with. I'm trying to get right inside them, to just think with them with one mind... And sometimes we can get so close, man, until we can all sound like one person.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Rashied Ali quoted in Val Wilmer, *As serious as your life: Black music and the free jazz revolution 1957-1977,* (Serpent's Tail: London, 2018), 231.

The theory of history which is also the material practice of history to which Hegel, a racist, owes his existence, is that which, not only constructs the Negro, but constructs him [sic] as "the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state," the character for whom "all thought of reverence and humanity" must be laid aside, the man in whom "there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found."<sup>7</sup>

There is however one feature that points to something beyond; – the *Worship of the Dead* – in which their deceased forefathers and ancestors are regarded by them as a power influencing the living.

And:

The drum beat, and a terrible carnage was begun; all who came in the way of the frenzied Negroes in the streets were stabbed.<sup>8</sup>

Both for Hegel and the Negro (only through Hegel) improvisation is an unthinkable practice. Even as he speculates (or prophesies?) toward something unknown, something unknowable (for him), which involves the drum, our ancestors, and a certain kind of militancy, it is beyond the realms of the graspable for Philosophy and his theory of history. Moten elaborates elsewhere.

The music, the sexual cut, is what remains unheard by philosophy – by the mode of attention allowed by the philosophical distinctions

 <sup>7</sup> Georg Wilhelm Freidrich Hegel, The philosophy of history, (Dover Publications Inc,: New York, 1956), 93.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Ibid., 95 & 98.

between essence and contingency, individuality and collectivity, particularity and universality – but the music is also precisely what is heard and improvised in philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

So for Hegel – even as there is an acknowledgement of an unknown in that which the drum invokes or points towards, and what the music hears and Philosophy doesn't – the Humanity of the Negro is out of reach for his epistemological incapability. Outside of the imaginative parameters of his method of thought. Foreclosed to the motive force of negativity. The Negro could not even enter his Philosophy as a being capable of negating itself and becoming a new determination. We were stuck in our untamed, wild state, a category of existence in dissonant relation with Humanity. It seems as if Hegel, in naming the world, categorising it, was unable to adequately practice his own method of logic when it came to the Negro.

Negativity, which Julia Kristeva endeavours to name the fourth term of the dialectic:

[M]ay be thought of as both the cause and the organising principle of the *process*, comes from Hegel. The concept of negativity... figures as the indissoluble relation between an "ineffable" mobility and its "particular determination." Negativity is the mediation, the supersession of the "pure abstractions" of being and nothingness in the concrete where they are both only moments... Negativity constitutes the logical impetus beneath

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Fred Moten, *In the break: The aesthetics of the black radical tradition*, (University of Minneapolis Press: Minnesota, 2003), 133.

the thesis of negation and that of the negation of negation, but is identical to neither since it is, instead, the logical functioning of the movement that produces the theses.<sup>10</sup>

Beyond the question of thought, though, Lenin, a materialist, came to accept negativity "as an objective principle – the principle of all physical and spiritual life,"<sup>11</sup> understanding it had a material existence as a force driving change and movement. Or *the* force or *the* principle producing continual movement. As that which ensures eternal motion, and affirms the mantra that nothing is forever, since it too will negate and become a new determination of itself in the perpetual process of becoming, negativity is of central importance to the dialectic. And since "Dialectic is essentially to do with the absenting of constraints on absenting absences or ills (which may be regarded as constraints),"<sup>12</sup> negativity is deeply important to us in our participation in the movement seeking to abolish the present.

> The dialectical stage sees [these] categories as superseding themselves and turning into their opposites... However, it is the movement between the two that Hegel sees as important. The moment pure being is thought it thinks not only of itself but of what it is to become, its opposite, which is nothing. Nothing is similarly going to become being and this implies that "their truth is, therefore, this movement of the immediate

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in poetic language*, (Columbia University Press: New York, 1984), 107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The pulse of freedom,* (Verso: London, 1993), Preface.

vanishing of the one into the other: *becoming*, a movement in which both are distinguished, but by a difference which has immediately resolved itself."<sup>13</sup> This "becoming," the movement out of dialectical opposition into something new, is the Speculative stage of "positive reason."

This, the dialectical moment is the site of interest and of inquiry: The moment of the speculative leap toward and before the next determination of itself. This moment in Black improvisatory traditions is elongated and extended. Such that "pure being" remains a precarious site of a certain sustained and speculative kind of questioning rather than a wholly abstracted site of "thought" or an affirmed mode of "being" (since the question of being is part of the problematic). The immediate vanishing, the dynamic principle, is stretched through the real movement of swing to constitute "becoming" as a fluxual state and a suspended site of production and performance.

Stefano Harney on suspending space and time and speculation:

[A]nd by speculation here, I also mean something that is a bit idle, something that is a bit free, something that is maybe not evidenced correctly, that maybe has a whiff of conspiracy, that maybe has a kind of wildness about it. That that kind of speculation done in those kinds of spaces actually in a way sets itself up very directly against capital.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Ian Fraser, "Two of a kind: Hegel, Marx, dialectic and form," Captial & Class 21, no. 1 (1997), 85-86.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Stefano Harney, "Stefano Harney part 1 on Speculative Practice in Theory," YouTube, Uploaded on 21 July 2018, accessed on 25 January 2019, https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=qOQrvp6Pz-0.

I like this Notion of speculation. It's kinda like that thought on the edge of your brain that you can't quite access wholly but you are thinking towards it, improvising a pathway, or a bridge as part of the route to get there. It's a mode of thinking and practice which refuses that which has been refused to us - the academy, the foreclosed category of Humanity - and instead embraces the very outside-ness of that position, as an anti-capitalist resource. This positions the Speculative as a wild untamed and un-evidenced moment of Negativity. It is perhaps that hint of a beyond, that external force which suggests that the dialectic is not closed and not finished, that the movement cannot be fully grasped in the context of its emergence. Or out side. That keeps it moving, in interesting and often un-expected ways. The hunch that whispers in your ear to take a giant step out into that path which is not yet known to be swimmable.

# AN IDEAL SCIENCE

The fundamental moment of practice is thus the heterogeneous contradiction that posits a subject put in process/on trial by a natural or social outside that is not yet symbolised, a subject in conflict with previous theses (in other words, with

# those systems of representation that defer and delay the violence of rejection).<sup>15</sup>

The scientificity of Coltrane's early playing, the rigourous study of the tradition he inherits and he eclipses, is glimpsed as he is pushing it out to its furthest reaches in giant steps. Great LEAPS Lenin might say. Is his move away from the piano as the primary compositional tool and the parallel move from the fixation on chords as the primary structuring feature of the music one of the breaks between early and late Coltrane? The marker between a Coltranic scientific materialism (a scientific approach to the material) and a Coltranic idealism (a belief in the redemptive power of the melody, the ensemble, and the improvisational potentiality of these collective practices)? A deep and irrational belief in the creative capacities of the ensemble. The Rational could never have produced *Ascension, Expression* or even *Impressions*.

In Ralph Gleason's liner notes to Olé Coltrane, Trane is quoted on his breaking approach to composition.

> I've been going to the piano and working things out, but now I think I'm going to move away from that. When I was working on those sequences that ran across the piano, I was trying to give all the instruments the sequences to play and I was playing them too. I was advised to keep the rhythm section as free and uncluttered as possible

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Kristeva, *Revolution in poetic language*, 202 & 203.

and if I wanted to play the sequences or run a whole string of chords, do it myself but leave them free. So I thought about that and I've tried that some, and I think that's about the way we're going to have to do it. I won't go to the piano anymore. I think I'm going to write for the horn from now on, just play around the horn and see what I can hear. All the time I was with Miles Davis I didn't have anything to think about but myself so I stayed at the piano and chords, chords, chords! I ended up playing them on my horn.<sup>16</sup>

With the piano as the periodic table of the western-derived music system, the cornerstone of its science, the chordal structure then carries a somewhat empirical basis of possible improvisatory paths on a given tune. One of the central questions posed by the free jazz movements – including the modal thing the play from zero thing the time no changes thing the bend the notes beyond where they supposed to go thing the unthinkable thing the between tonalities thing the abstract reflection thing the chordless thing the yet to happen thing – was: What impossibilities emerge tonically and sonically when you move away from the tried and tested established scientific basis? Against what type of science are we then playing? What sciences of sound are we hearing? Are we still kool scientists of sound, mathematically putting it down?

Perhaps the scientificity of late Coltrane's music is, in sonic territory – once he LEAPT out from the chords and the scientific basic of the piano – in a realm parallel to that in which String Theory operates? In one of the seven spatial dimensions that some science intuitively believes exist but

<sup>16</sup> Ralph Gleason original 1961 liner notes on John Coltrane, *Olé Coltrane*, (WaxTimeRecords 771929, 2014). has no empirical method to prove where and what those dimensions are? Surely string theory and its fundamental assumption of the world existing in eleven dimensions positions science as a space of abstract improvisation taking off into various unknown realms by extrapolating what we know beyond the context in which we know it or can even prove it? The materialists and the hard core believers in Science, might call this idealism although it has been through these types of speculative excursions into unprovable, non-empirically verifiable territories which have paved the way for breakthroughs in experimental physics. Think about it.

## NOT QUITE: IN TIME!

I said, swing, man, you know, swing man, is getting you to go from one point to another point. It's putting life into you – you can't put the dang dang ga-dang dang and call that the swing rhythm! Swing it means man, when you can feel man like ey man, I wanna live to the next day...<sup>17</sup> <sup>17</sup> Milford Graves, "Milford Graves Full Mantis – trailer | IFFR 2018," uploaded on 16 January 2018, YouTube, accessed on 25 January 2019, https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=ePiESZA2I7Y.

Black improvisatory practices are perhaps the science of proving the unprovable by other means. Beyond the realm of possible knowing as the dominant infrastructures of knowledge are currently configured. Playing beyond possible conceptions of time and space and it is by and through that and with by and through the other cats on this journey that we exist. Perhaps not in the terms inscribed here but besides them in a realm unprovable, one which I have to feel for. That is why improvisation is always so fixated on reaching beyond the moment or stretching the possibilities of what the momentary can hold. Because it's a quest for a realm where the questions of Black ontology find the possibility for a more concrete, ie. sonic, response.

What did Marx foreclose when he insisted on the ideological terrain of science as the absolute method for understanding the world? What pockets of the world and what speculative practices did these spectacles prevent him from seeing, hearing and participating in? Was it the aura of science that made him think that he wasn't improvising? Is swing an essence or antithesis of science and could late Marx play through early Coltrane's changes?

#### BIOGRAPHIES

Maryan Abdulkarim is a writer and active participant in social discourse living in Helsinki, Finland. Abdulkarim and Eveliina Talvitie co-authored the book *Noin 10 myyttiä feminismistä* (10 myths about feminism, 2018). Abdulkarim and Pauliina Feodoroff together form the *Silta collective*, and she is currently working on a project about radical collective dreaming, *We Should All Be Dreaming*, together with Sonya Lindfors.

Khadar Ahmed is a Paris and Helsinki-based filmmaker. His short films *Citizens* (2007) and *The Night Thief* (2017) have been screened and awarded at numerous film festivals around the world. Ahmed will be shooting his directorial debut film *The Gravedigger* in Djibouti later this year.

Hassan Blasim is an Iraqi-Finnish author and filmmaker. Blasim's work has been translated into over 20 languages. His literary work includes a novel, short stories, poems, essays, articles and other writings. He has received a freedom of speech award from the English PEN three times: for *The Madman of Freedom Square, The Iraqi Christ* and *Iraq 100+*. Blasim's first novel, *Allah 99*, was published in Arabic in 2018 and in Finnish in 2019. English translation is to be published during 2019.

**Giovanna Esposito Yussif** is a curator and researcher with background in art history, museology, and critical theory. In the past few years, Esposito Yussif has focused her praxis on collective models of inquiry, situated knowledges, exercises of criticality, and processes of dissentient imaginations. She is currently devising research on non-dominant practices.

Sonya Lindfors is a Helsinki based artist that works with choreography, facilitating, community organizing and education. Lindfors' recent series of stage works centralize questions around blackness and otherness, black body politics, representation and radical utopian dreaming. Lindfors is interested in creating and facilitating anti-racist and feminist platforms that can operate as the sites of radical collective dreaming.

#### Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

is an independent curator, author and biotechnologist. He is founder and artistic director of SAVVY Contemporary Berlin. He was curator-at-large for documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel, and guest curator of the 2018 Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal. He is currently artistic director of the 12th Rencontres de Bamako, a biennale for African photography, 2019, as well as artistic director of Sonsbeek 2020, a quadrennial contemporary art exhibition in Arnhem, the Netherlands.

**Outi Pieski** is a Sámi visual artist based in Ohcejohka (Utsjoki) and Numminen, Finland. Her paintings and installations explore the Arctic region and the interdependency of nature and culture. Combining the Sámi craft tradition of duodji with contemporary art, Pieski's work prompts discussion and reflection on the Sámi people and culture within transnational discourse.

Leena Pukki is a visual artist interested in cultural hegemonies, the relationship between human and other species, history, utopias, feelings and power relations. Pukki's techniques extend from large-scale mural painting to media art and wearable artwork. She often works in public spaces and in different artist groups or communities, also combining art with activism.

Lorenzo Sandoval works as an artist and curator. His recent research deals with the connections between computation, textiles, photography and domesticity. Since 2015, he has run The Institute for Endotic Research, which opened as a venue in 2018, together with Benjamin Busch.

Christopher Lorenzo Thomas is a filmmaker based in Helsinki, Finland. His work uses the migrant experience as a starting point to explore themes of power, education, bureaucracy, and the dynamics of seeing and being seen.

Martta Tuomaala is a multidisciplinary artist based in Helsinki. Her artistic practice involves elements of socially engaged art and militant research. Common themes in her artworks include workers' everyday life, the struggles of different individuals and communities, and abuse of power. Tuomaala is also actively pushing for better working conditions in the field of art and culture.

Christopher Wessels is a founding member of The Museum of Impossible Forms and Third Space (2014-2016) both in Helsinki. His artistic and curatorial practices look at the un-silencing of counter-hegemonic narratives and the building of counter hegemonic institutions with anti-racist, anti-sexist and class consciousness at their foundations. In the autumn he starts teaching at the University of Witwatersrand School of Arts in Johannesburg South Africa.

Suvi West is a River Sámi storyteller and film-maker from Sávvon on the Upper Tana River. The majority of her work addresses Sámi culture, society and identity. As a storyteller she likes to think of herself as a maid of Gieddegašgálgu, an ancient Sámi spirit and keeper of all the knowledge in the world. At the moment West is interested in decolonizing ways of storytelling and in studying Sámi ways of sharing knowledge. Asher Gamedze works as a cultural worker; reads and writes about revolutionary thought and practice and black cultural production, histories and futures; organises and does education work with collectives like the interim and pathways to free education; plays music, performs with a variety of ensembles from Jozi to Chicago and Cape Town.

**Eeva-Kristiina Harlin** studies the repatriation politics of tangible Sámi heritage as a doctoral researcher at the University of Oulu, Giellagas Institute (institute for Saami Cultural Studies) in Finland. Earlier she has worked in Finnish and Norwegian Sámi museums, for example with surveys of Sámi collections in Nordic and European museums.

Skuvllaalbmá Áslat Niillas Áslat; Aslak Holmberg is a member of the Ellos Deatnu movement, a politician, activist, fisherman and teacher. He is a vice president of the Saami Council and a member of the Sámi parliament of Finland. He has a master's degree in indigenous studies from the University of Tromsø.

Niillas Holmberg is a Saami poet, musician, actor and activist. He is involved in several movements against exploitation of nature, such as mining, in the traditional Saami areas. Environmental and cultural aspects are the core of his artistic expression and he is known as an upfront spokesman for Saami and indigenous rights to self-determination. Niillas lives in his native Ohcejohka (Utsjoki), Saamiland (occupied by Finland).

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If people have been engaging with the possible "and the way the world is today is the result of the possible that they did," then what would be the results of imagining and engaging with the impossible?

-Miracle Workers Collective

With poems, essays, unsolved questions, conversations and illustrations by Maryan Abdulkarim, Khadar Ahmed, Hassan Blasim, Giovanna Esposito Yussif, Asher Gamedze, Eeva-Kristiina Harlin, Aslak Holmberg, Niillas Holmberg, Sonya Lindfors, David Muñoz-Alcántara, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Outi Pieski, Leena Pukki, Lorenzo Sandoval, Christopher L. Thomas, Martta Tuomaala, Christopher Wessels, and Suvi West.



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