This Troubled Ground: Mapping relationships between motherhood, ecology, and future care, explores how mothering can become a framework for reimagining how we relate, respond, and adapt in times of ecological and social uncertainty. Through writing, design experiments, and visual storytelling, the project examines the intersections between human and more-than-human relationships, asking what lessons of interdependence and resilience might be drawn from the natural world. Blending research and reflection, the work draws on a variety of authors and thinkers to weave together ideas from ecology, feminism, and design, tracing how acts of attention, maintenance, and reciprocity can help us navigate unstable futures and forge deeper connections to place, planet, and one another.

Comprising four parts, the book moves between theory, reflection, and visual inquiry, each section unfolding a different way of thinking through mothering as method. The fourth part is three different accompanied guide books, 'Mapping Uncertainties' which is a practical companion, inviting readers to engage with these ideas through observation, creative exercises, and situated practices that extend the work beyond the book itself.

1. Mothering In A Dying World
2. Motherhood Beyond The Human
3. Mothering As A New Language
4. Mapping The Uncertainty (Concrete Dwellers, Urban Fringe Dwellers and Rural Residents)

On This Troubled Ground Bailey Murphy

On This Troubled Ground

Mapping relationships between motherhood, ecology and future care

Bailey Murphy

With writing by:

Donna J. Haraway
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Kristin Natalier
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Carla Pascoe Leahy
Jade Sasser
Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder

Hand bound and designed by Bailey Murphy in her tiny loft under a giant ironbark tree. Made for Visual Communications (Honours) at the University of Technology Sydney. Class of 2025.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ON THIS TROUBLED GROUND

My family home borders the Ku Ring Gai National Park which is traditional land of the Guringai people. It is land I am privileged to live and work on, it is land that was never ceded and always was and always will continue to be Aboriginal land. It is a sandstone playground of tall ironbarks, scribbly gums and waxflowers, I am visited by feather tail gliders, rainbow lorrikeets, water dragons. At 3pm yellow tailed black cockatoos fly from the National Park across to the pine cone trees that line across the footy field.

'On This Troubled Ground' is a Honours Visual Communications Project completed with the University of Technology Sydney. This publication was made for academic purposes and is not a commercial work.

① *Mothering* IN A DYING WORLD

② *Motherhood* BEYOND THE HUMAN

A

① *Mothering* IN A DYING WORLD

② *Motherhood* BEYOND THE HUMAN

③ *Mothering* AS A NEW LANGUAGE

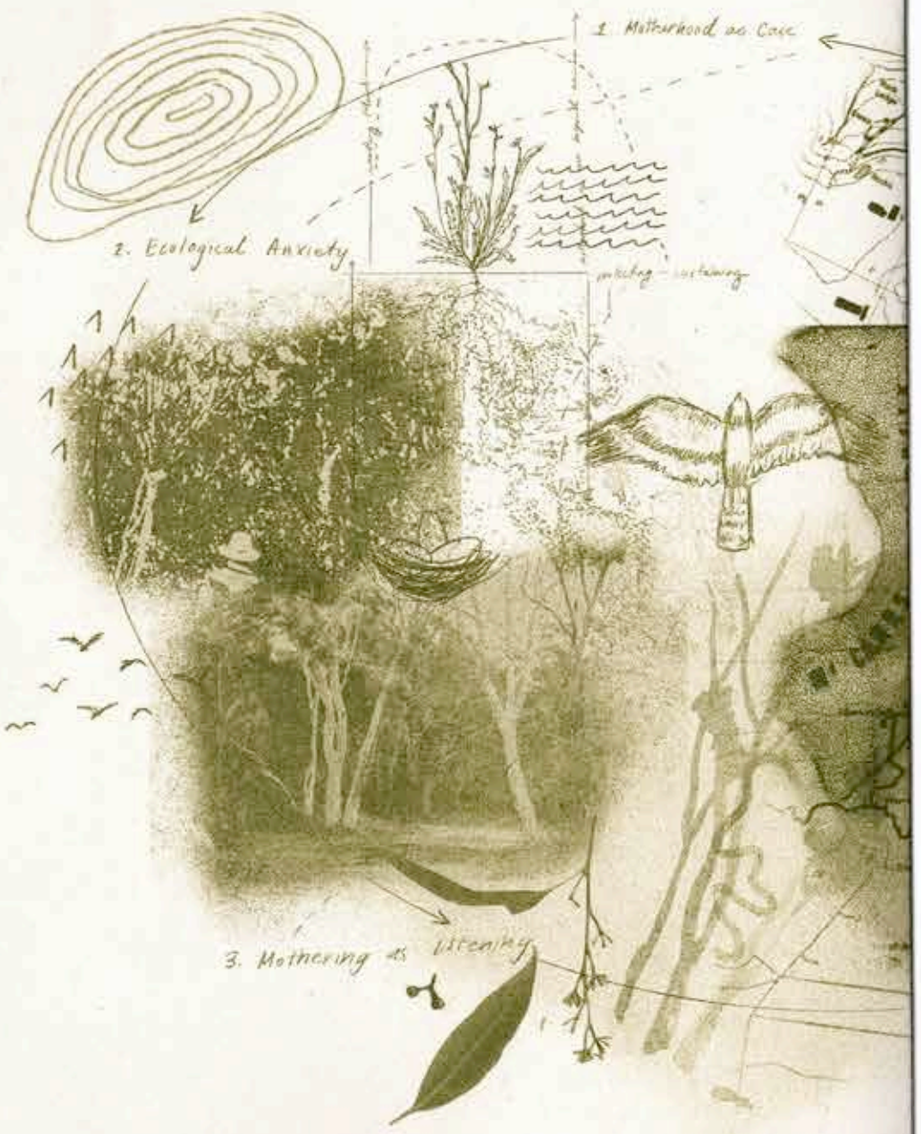
④ *Mapping* THE UNCERTAINTY

③

Mothering
AS A NEW LANGUAGE

④

Mapping
THE UNCERTAINTY



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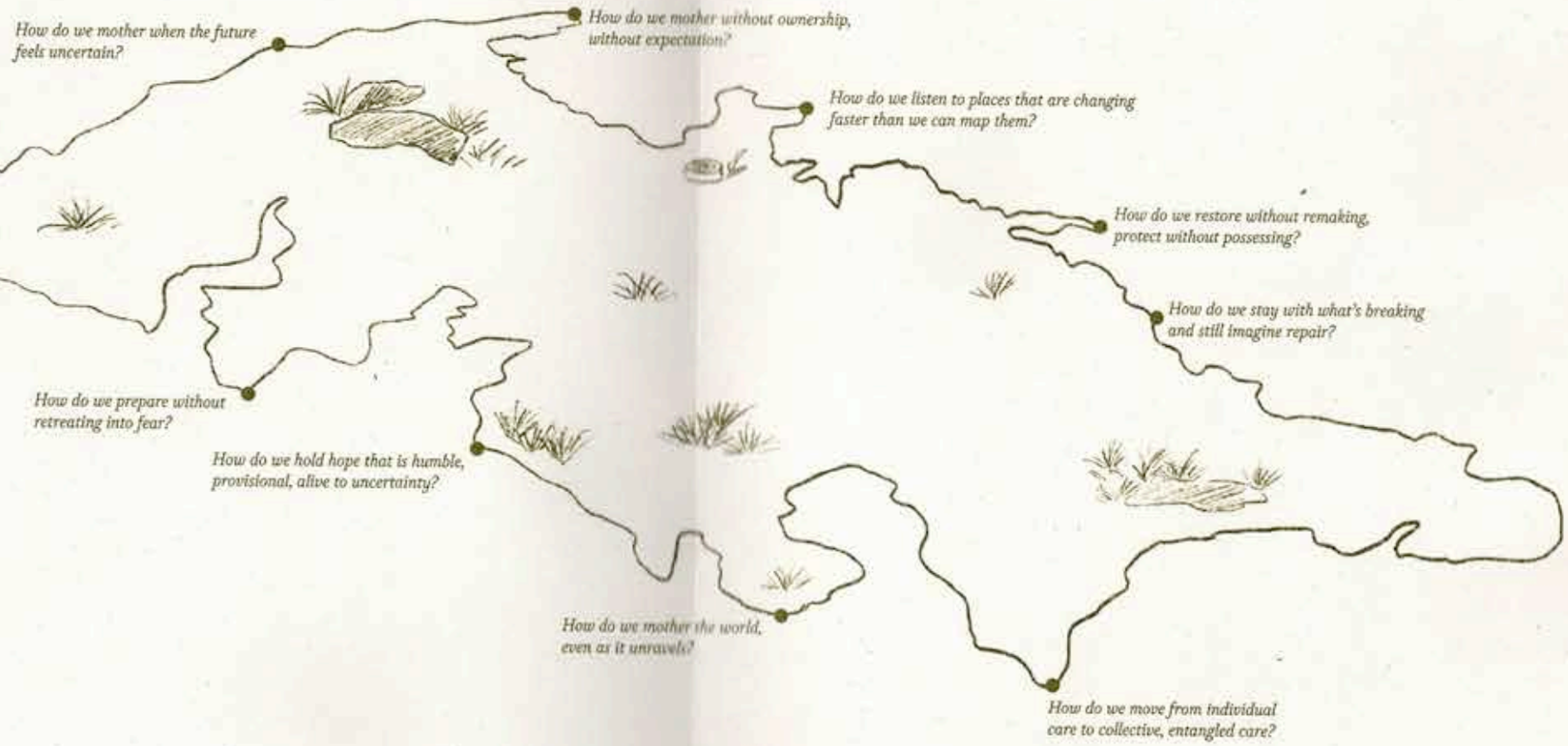
Mapping
THE UNCERTAINTY

Booklets

Methods for the concrete dwellers

Methods for the urban fringe dwellers

Methods for the rural residents



THANK-YOU

ON THIS TROUBLED GROUND

I wanted to say a special than k
to my tutor, Zoë Sadokierski, for her guidance and insight throughout this project, and to Monica Monin and Gabriel Clarke for their invaluable support and mentoring. Thank you also to my cohort for your encouragement, reassuring messages, forced breaks, and always conside ed, thoughtful feedback.

To my family and partner, thank you for your love and patience, and ongoing support through this journey. To my Mum, thankyou for revealing the world's oddities and inspiring me to see them through a creative and passionate le


1. Motherhood as Care
2. Ecological Anxiety
3. Mothering as Dreaming
4. Mapping Uncertainty

I am not a Mother.

I want you to know, before reading on, I am an Australian woman who is privileged: a loving family, a roof over my head, access to education, a support network and freedom to write the following without fear of punishment. I am an observer to Motherhood, the labours, traumas, joy and heart wrenching job that often (in my opinion) goes unnoticed. To Mother is to change your brain chemistry, to commit to a life outside your own indefinitely, to feel a whole new degree of pain (physically & metaphorically).

ABOVE
Snippets of Mum's stamp collection. Hundreads of them categorised by Country of Origin.

Why do I talk about any of this if I am not a mum? I think becoming a mum is one of my most recurring anxieties, the pressure, the change, the commitment. A part of me is so scared of becoming a mum and well, being a shit mum. Not being everything my own mum is to me; selfless, understanding, never judgemental. I am scared of being the mum that simply can't do the unseen and unpaid labour. Whilst another part of me which feels twice as big, is simply terrified that I will never have the maternal urge. That I will never alter my brain chemistry, never hold another human inside and experience the daunting ride of parenthood. I am sure I am not the only one, but it feels taboo to talk about these fears. So I am putting it out there, in hopes to make someone else who might also feel this way, feel heard, and seen.

a tree. It anchors even the heaviest of branches. My admiration for her and her dedication to motherhood transcends well beyond me, but a heaviness, gut turning, nauseating feeling enters when I think about the possibility of having my own children. It's a deep guilty sadness that turns me inside out but it's a decision I can't help but feel uncertain about. Yes, to mother is to practice care, relate, hold, it is to pass knowledge, to tell stories, to see the unseen. But, It is also to labour, to work twice as hard and selflessly for another life, it is pick-ups, drop offs, thinking weeks in advance, expectational clean ups, being a doctor, a teacher and a carer all at once. It's one of the hardest jobs in the world and I don't think enough people say it. I think to myself, what does our future on earth look like? How certain am I a future child will not inherit a world at (more) war or soaring temperatures and decimated species? What stories am I capable of passing on?
Can it be a framework, a noun, a story, a way of imagining, speculating? Can it

COULD MOTHERING BE MORE?

be the river that feeds the reeds and the platypus slipping in and out of the bank? Can mothering be leaving water out on hot days, planting flowers instead of grass for native bees? Can mothering move outside its gendered concept, can it become a feeling, something spiritual and emotive? Can it feel powerful yet fragile, tending to change, adapting and evolving, something rooted in a system bigger than all of us?

24° 14' 56.118" S 131° 34' 58.392 "E

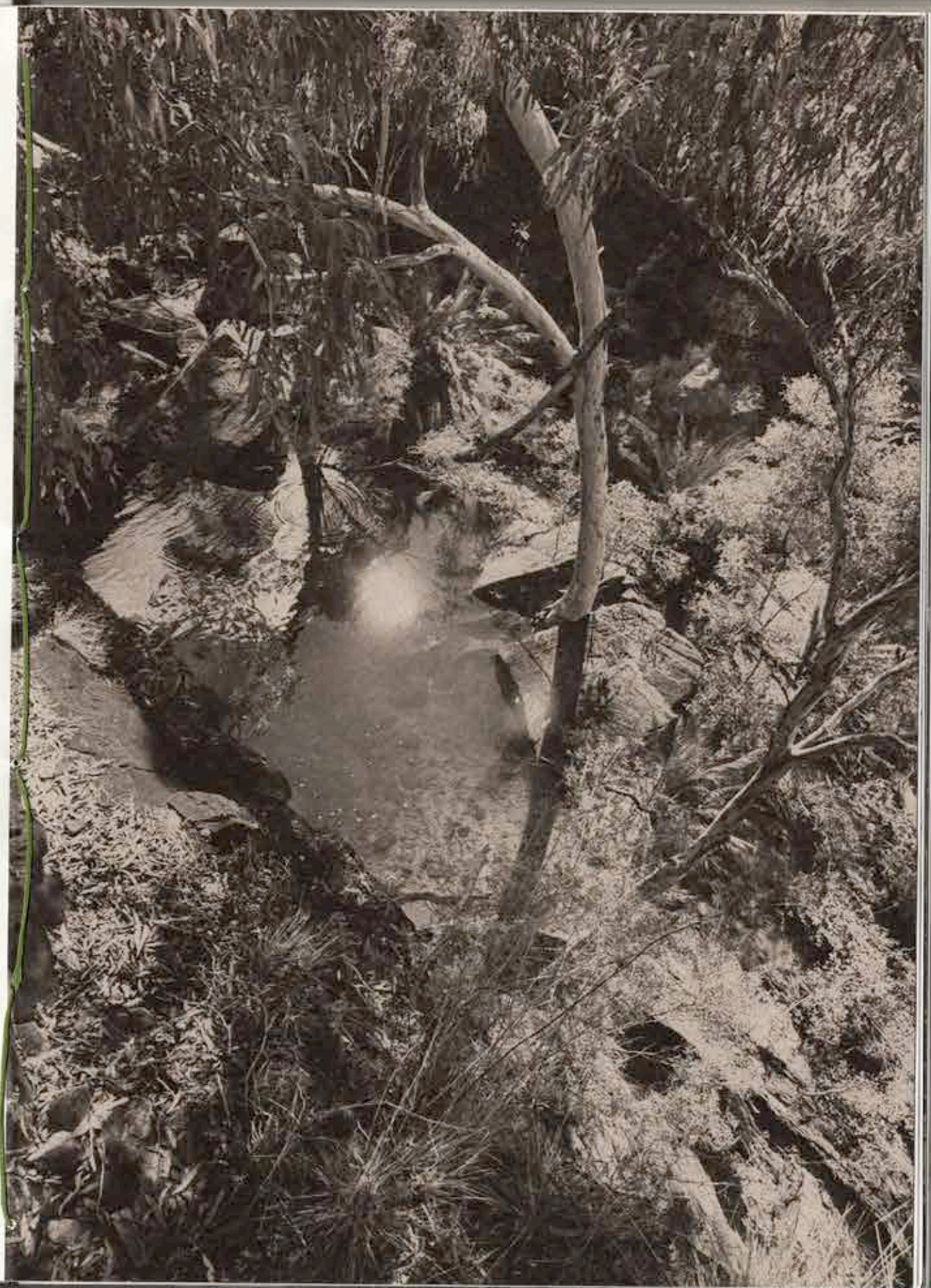
MOTHER
[muhth-er]
verb

[1] *To sustain, shelter, or make space for life, often through acts of care, tending, or quiet resilience.*

[2] *To hold responsibility in uncertain conditions, offering continuity without resolution.*

[3] *To enact relational care across human & more-than-human worlds.*

RIGHT
Natural freshwater pool, east end of the King's Canyon creek walk. Northern Territory, Australia.



①

MOTHERING

In A Dying World

IN A WORLD that is slowly deteriorating, and in current times I feel socially more then environmentally, as a young designer I am looking for ways to see the future in a not so dim light - but its f***ing hard. I know I am not alone in that feeling. There's a problem here, there's a thick barrier between the human and non human that is suffocating. We are living in a time of ecological breakdown, an over attachment to our phones and the way we have managed to make the world feel oh so small and oh so connected, but the future feels fragile and I myself am feeling that growing hesitation to have children, but it makes me question does choosing not to mother mean I am giving up on the future? Not out of selfishness, but out of care, a fear of bringing life into a world that feels increasingly unstable. I feel a growing hesitation about having children. I know I am not alone. This publication makes room for that unease. Here, mothering is a method rather than a role. It is a practice of noticing, tending and holding. What follows is not a fix. It is way of staying with the discomfort and responding with small acts of care.

MOTHERING IN A DYING WORLD
phrase

[1] *The act of caring, tending, or imagining futures in the context of ecological and social decline.*

[1] *A practice shaped by uncertainty, where familiar childhood rites, mud, puddles, broken arms, give way to screen time and indoor days, as rising heat and fragile environments alter the conditions of growing up.*

[1] *A way of naming the unease that surrounds decisions about care and reproduction when the future feels unstable.*

RIGHT
Cross Pattern of Northern Territory, Bailey Murphy.

33°42'22.908'S 151°10'23.405'E

Jade Sasser

The Kid Question is Unjust

Climate anxiety and the kid question:
Deciding whether to have children
in an uncertain future, 2024.

THE KID QUESTION. It comes up over and over again in the form of family questions and expectations. It arises in conversations with peers, partners, and new dates. It appears in the quiet times, sitting in the spaces where our wildest hopes and deepest fears collide. This question is not small or lighthearted; it is not a thought experiment. It adds pressure to the task of figuring out how to create a future life that will be happy and safe, for self and loved others. Including others who don't yet exist. These others are, of course, children.

For me, questions from family members have gotten quieter and less frequent as I entered my forties and my older sister had children, alleviating some of the pressure that was previously directed my way. The internal questions have also quieted at the end of my reproductive window, but that doesn't mean that there aren't cherished children in my life. I am an auntie, a godmother, a fun older cousin. They're not a family of my own creation, but I do wonder about their future, how they will grow up, whether they will ever have families of their own, what the planet will look and feel like when the time comes for them to ask those questions for themselves. For you, those children may be actual babies gestated in the womb. Or they may be children born of others' wombs, families, and communities, brought in to complete the vision of a family you've otherwise had difficulty creating. Regardless of how they arrived, they are a family of your own creation. You are responsible for them. You must keep them safe, healthy, out of harm's way. It is your job to ensure that they survive to adulthood with all of the tools and resources necessary to help them thrive and be happy. As you contemplate that, you wonder whether you are capable. Can you do this? Perhaps you've struggled with anxiety and depression. Should you have kids? American society feels more socially and politically polarized than ever—is it right to bring another person into that? Racism has shaped some of your key life experiences, which you would never want a child to endure—can you let another generation go through that? You worry about the

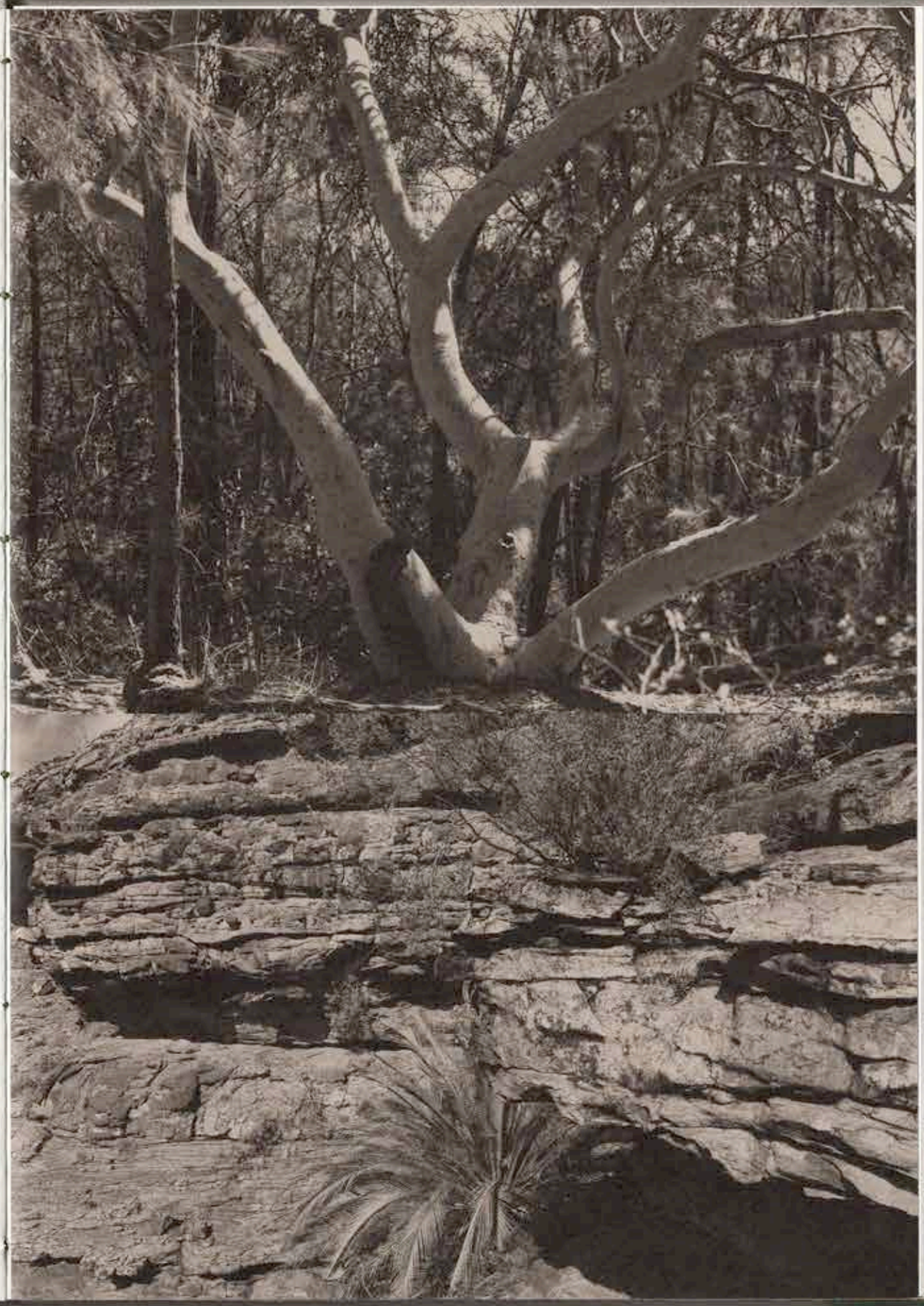
It appears in the quiet times, sitting in the spaces where our wildest hopes and deepest fears collide.

Jade Sasser

TOP RIGHT
Scribbly gum on the Mueller Track, Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, St Ives.

BOTTOM RIGHT
Rock wall, Kings Canyon Creek Walk.

next strong rain-storm or snowstorm after watching news footage of recent floods that killed dozens of people, or blizzards whose lingering blankets of ice and snow took more than a month to clear away. You think ahead to September and October, hurricane season, and say a little prayer that this year's storms won't be as bad as last year, when you had to evacuate, returning to find that your house had been hit even harder than you'd imagined. Or you look out of your window at a hazy August sky, smoke in the air and the temperature at a constant 102 degrees, your asthma getting worse by the year. You feel a sense of sadness seep in, wondering whether this is the new normal, or—even worse—if this is the mildest version of what's yet to come. Through it all, you think, Can I have a kid in the midst of this? But then you spend an afternoon with your family, watching movies, playing with the dogs, or having a very earnest conversation with your three-year-old nephew about ducks, and you breathe a sigh of relief. Your family is imperfect but they're yours. And when you're with them, you get to just be. There's safety in it. Protection from the outside. Maybe even happiness. Or even the realization that their imperfections are exactly why having this for yourself is so important. So that you can break the cycles, create the safe space, be the person you needed when you were little. You think, This is exactly what I want. I want a family of my own. These competing feelings—fear and anxiety about climate change, an insistent desire to create a family, and in some cases, the determination to break with family tradition and forge a different path—are the subject of this chapter. The chapter focuses on a series of interviews I conducted with Millennials and members of Generation Z in 2021 and 2022.1 They are a diverse bunch, all of them people of color: Black, Asian, Latino, Native American. Some grew up in low-income families and neighborhoods while others' parents were middle or upper-middle class. Some of them identify as queer, or their close family members and friends do, which shapes their sensitivity to discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. An awareness



RIGHT
'Redacted',
Bailey Murphy

of, and sensitivity to, the intersections of ine-quality has played a big role in their lives, their families, and their visions of the future.

In some cases, so have the experiences of immigration and adjusting to cultural and generational differences. Their experiences as members of marginalized groups shape their experiences with climate emotions like anxiety, fear, and trauma—as well as hope and optimism. In this chapter, I argue that their challenging climate emotions are the result of injustice. These emotions fall hardest on those already plagued by a general sense of vulnerability, whether it's because they grew up in low-income families, attended under-resourced schools, or lived in communities that were heavily policed and racially profiled. It could be because they watched their immigrant parents navigate financial and social barriers, or because they know that the polluted air hanging over their neighborhoods doesn't plague the neighborhoods of people with more social privilege and wealth. While everyone is subject to the experience of uncertainty, some people are protected by their privilege.

Mary Holmes, Kristin Natalier,
& Carla Pascoe Leahy

Unsettling maternal futures in climate crisis: *towards cohabitability?*

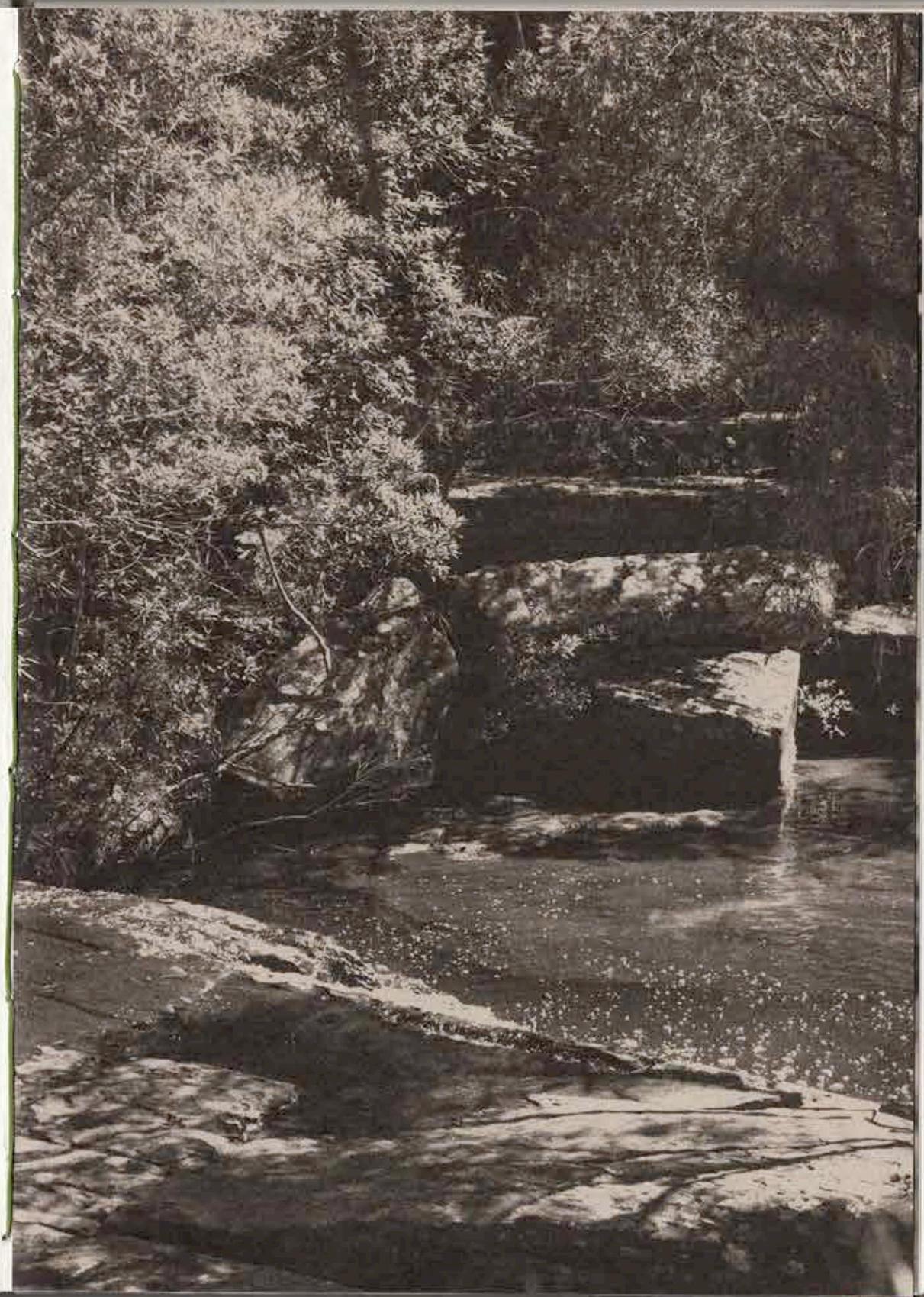
Families, Relationships and Societies, 2023.

RIGHT
Whipbird Falls, Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, St Ives.

MANY WOMEN describe how coming to understand the implications of the climate crisis has unsettled their visions of a maternal future. They are drawn into a reflexive process of planning and imagining their futures, strongly inflected by their own and others' sadness and loss. Kate's testimony exemplifies how her reproductive decision making is emotionally reflexive; her feelings about supposedly 'objective' science as well as about herself and others inform her thinking. She reflects on her feelings about environmental needs and makes relational engagements to establish her family and friends' emotions. "I would love to have a baby, but I am struggling to justify bringing a new person into a world that faces climate change and overpopulation. I don't feel like I can share my feelings with the majority of my friends and family. I have tried to explain my perspective to my parents, and it made them sad, and they have continued to encourage me to have kids regardless."

In articulating her ambivalence towards motherhood, Kate (a young married woman) weighs what she feels is environmentally justified against her maternal desire and her parents' sadness at the prospect of her childlessness. Her maternal future building challenges their expectations of her settling down to have children, reflecting the dominance and potential transformation of child-referenced family structures and practices. Aviva (mid-thirties) seems to struggle less with others' possible responses to her decision not to have children but is aware that uncertainty and a non-maternal future must be navigated against the feelings of her family and most of her friends. "Most of my friends want kids or have kids or have several kids. And they all ask when am I going to have mine and settle down? I actually hesitate to say, 'I'm not really sure I want kids.' And a lot of my friends and my family think that's strange. But I know that that's how I feel." These women are aware of how significant others may, or do, feel about their reluctance to have children; they

"I would love to have a baby, but I am struggling to justify bringing a new person into a world that faces climate change and overpopulation."



LEFT
'Divergent Norms', Bailey Murphy.

are asked when will they have children and 'settle down'. In Aviva's case, this makes her feel ambivalent or hesitant about revealing, making or enacting plans for child-free futures. Most of the women struggle to imagine alternative maternal futures not based on an individualised, gendered moral responsibility for doing things differently that is difficult to enact (Neckel and Hasenfratz, 2021. Their unsettled deliberations reflect their relationship with a generalised other: typically expressed through the term 'people'. Shannon is almost 40 and comments that 'people are still shocked' when she says she does not want children 'for environmental reasons.' Jessica will 'hesitate to tell people [her] reasons for not wanting to have another baby'. These women are working against a generalised current of approbation for having children, but this also makes them feel uncertain, requiring that they engage with tensions between what is environmentally sustainable and culturally valued. The women often contrast their environmental concerns with the generalised other's expectation of good – and unsustainable – mothering practices, and the normatively associated with 'settling down'. Meera, in her early forties, predicts that as you become a parent you see what the baby industry, what the child industry and the desire to be part of the pack of other parents [do] and you start to do these things that you probably wouldn't do. You start compromising, 'Okay, I'm gonna get goody bags for all 30 kids at the party' and then everything in those goody bags is made of plastic. Meera's imagined maternal future is one of compromise and submission to the expectations of the generalised other. She places in tension divergent norms of good mothering: being environmentally careful and complying with intensive, consumerist mothering (Hays, 1996;Meyering, 2013). Meera foresees mothering practices that would compromise her goal to pursue more sustainable mothering choices that might unsettle the capitalist 'child industry'. She stops short of imagining alternatives that challenge capitalism's hold over practices

"She places in tension divergent norms of good mothering: being environmentally careful and complying with intensive, consumerist mothering"

of intimacy and emotion (Hochschild, 2003; Illouz, 2009), such as the borrowed, gifted and handmade items that also circulate among mothers (Pascoe Leahy, 2021b). For some women, reflecting on the environmental implications of mothering leads them to consider the unsustainable social conditions of settling into mothering in the US: conditions lacking reference to cohabiting with others beyond the nuclear family. These social conditions include taking for granted unjust labour conditions and those who are victims of those conditions. Mei is in her late thirties, pregnant, and is beginning 'to see more systemically how climate change is linked to the way we live overall'. She says that 'these small everyday decisions around having a child and raising a child has also brought into focus a lot of other issues. Not only climate justice, but worker justice and this key disturbing individualism of our society'. And that's one small node in the problem of having kids in the US, because you know it's almost impossible to afford. People think that the solution to raise the family is to do it individually, inside the nuclear family, and if you can't to purchase the labour of somebody else to do it. We can't really do that and so that's an issue; but even if we could the people who provide childcare tend to be underpaid or low-waged and there's not a lot of social support to help people out in this situation. She navigates towards a relational approach that attends to non-family such as workers, but she does not explicitly connect this to ideas about cohabitability. Mei counters these concerns by noting that having children is meaningful to her. Maternal future building has prompted in Mei a simultaneous settling into motherhood and an attempt to unsettle individualised family practices, with a vision of building more sustainable maternal futures for all.

RIGHT
Flowering Warratah, Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden, St Ives.

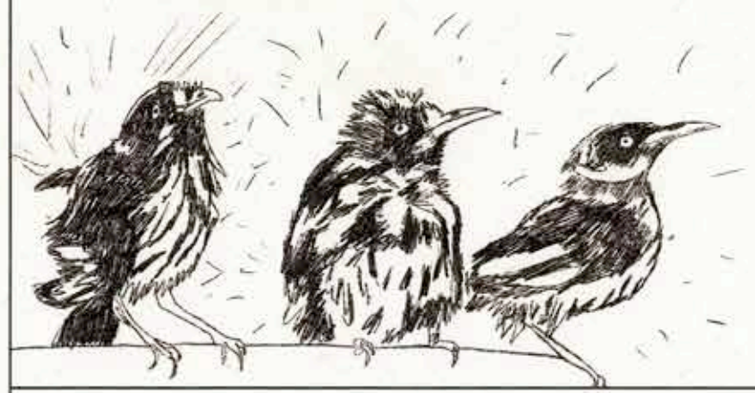
Bailey Murphy

Displaced

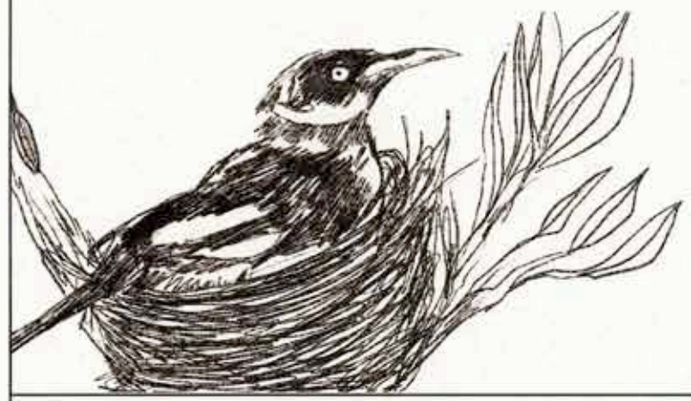
Displaced is a graphic response, by following the labour of nest-building and it's undoing, it asks how we understand motherhood, care, and vulnerability when the ground itself feels unstable.

I've wondered if having kids is the bravest thing you can do... or the most selfish. Maybe it's both.

My friends marvel at children... I don't always feel that pull. Maybe it's the exhaustion that scares me. Or the sheer weight of responsibility. What if the nest never holds?



Sometimes I feel guilty for not sensing the 'maternal instinct' everyone talks about. Parenthood looks like a vast terrain, endless tasks, choices, sacrifices.



Closer to home, I fear fragility: relationships cracking, houses that don't hold.

My partner longs for children. I worry that if the calling never comes, I'll let him down.

What does it feel like to truly long for a child? When the world itself feels so unstable?

How can I want to bring life into a future that feels so fragile, so easily taken?

So easily displaced.

Choosing not to have children can be an act of care for self, for community and for the living world.

It can be honest about capacity. It can reduce unpaid labour you cannot carry.

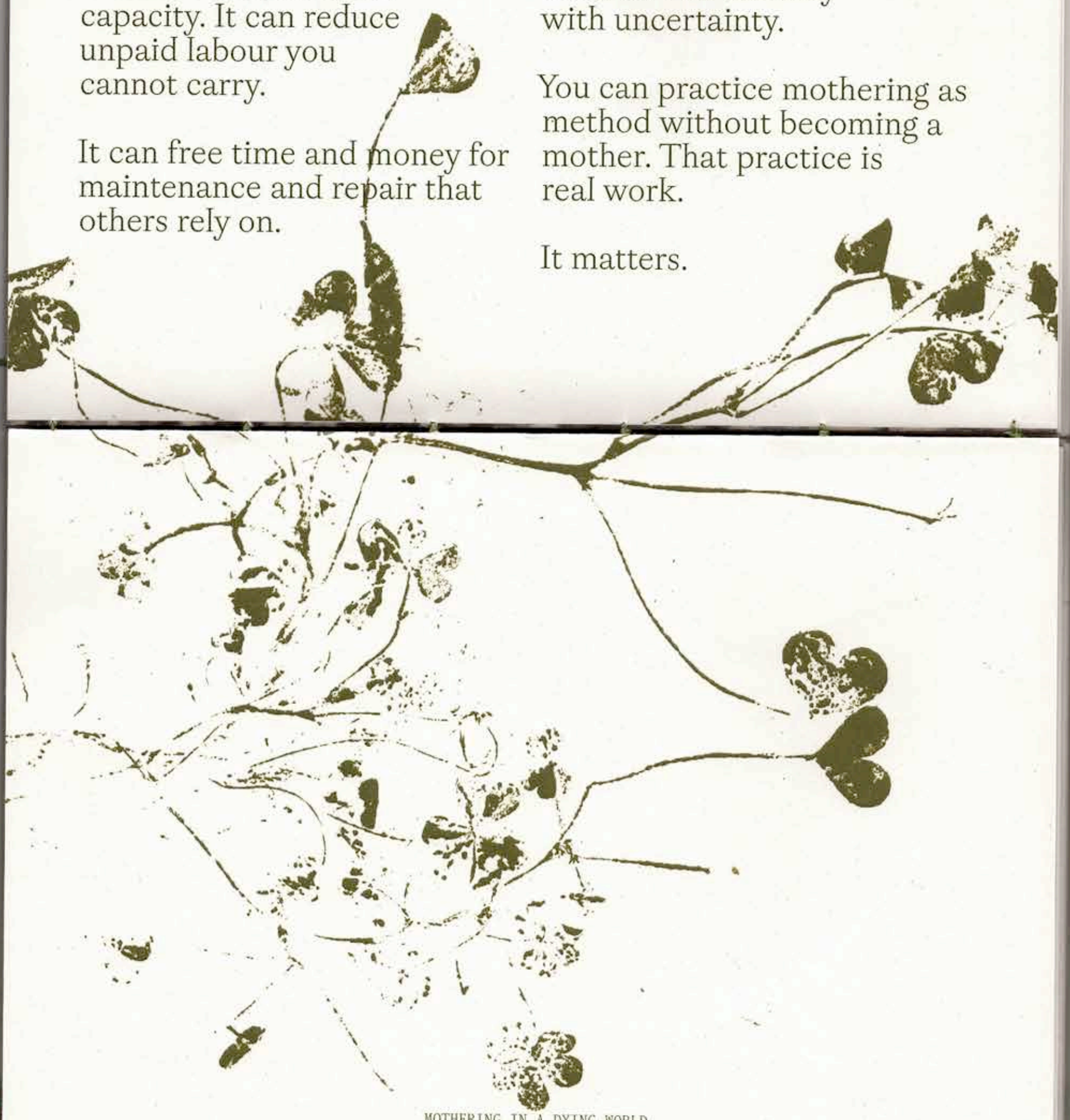
It can free time and money for maintenance and repair that others rely on.

It does not make you less generous. It does not exclude you from kin.

You do not owe anyone a final answer. You can stay with uncertainty.

You can practice mothering as method without becoming a mother. That practice is real work.

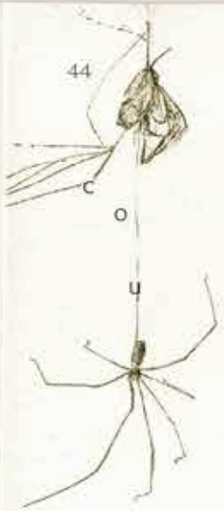
It matters.



②

MOTHERHOOD

Beyond the Human

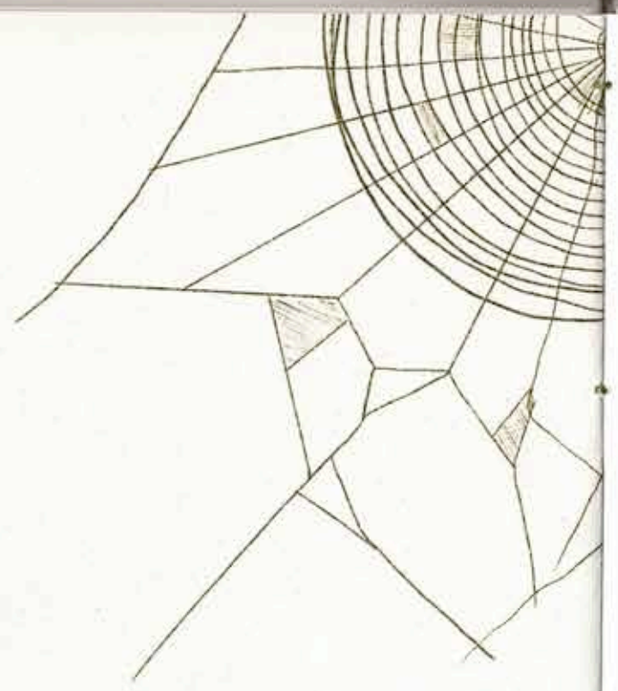


Beyond the human, mothering does not belong to a single role or body - it is shared, dispersed, and enacted in n t less forms of care. A hollowed tree that shelters, fungi that knit root systems together, a bird that broods eggs not its own. Here, mothering is not limited to reproduction but to relation. To notice how species shape and hold one another. To see stories that stretch across bodies, habitats and scales of time. As Collard, Dempsey and Sundberg write, "By abundance we mean more diverse and autonomous forms of life and ways of living together. In considering how to enact multispecies worlds, we take inspiration from Indigenous and peasant movements across the globe as well as decolonial and postcolonial scholars." This vision of abundance resonates with mothering as method: a way of loosening the human grip and recognising the more-than-human kinships already at work. This is not about escaping collapse but about paying attention to the quiet labours of care that persist despite it. To tell these stories is to remind ourselves that we are not alone in the work of holding life, and that the act of mothering is already happening all around us - in ways we might join, or simply learn to witness.

MOTHERHOOD BEYOND THE HUMAN *[phrase]*

1. *Acts of relation enacted across species and environments, where care circulates beyond the human body.*
2. *Practices of sheltering, feeding, tending, and connecting that emerge in ecological systems: roots joined by fungi, animals fostering young not their own, habitats offering refuge.*
3. *A framework for noticing how abundance is created through interdependence and diverse ways of living together.*

RIGHT
'The Work of Holding'
Bailey Murphy

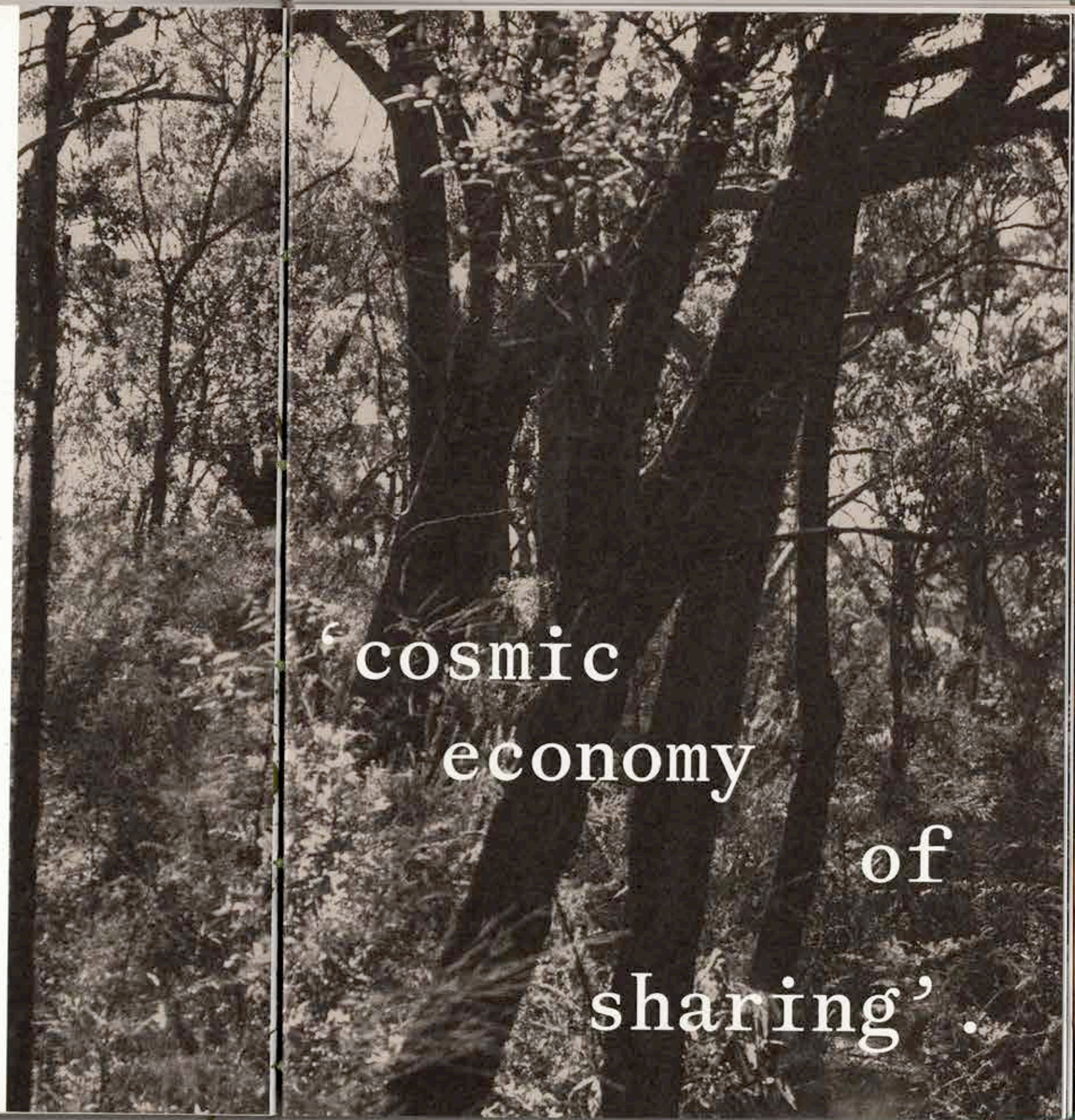


Tim Ingold

Children *of the* Forest

The Perception of the Environment, 2000.

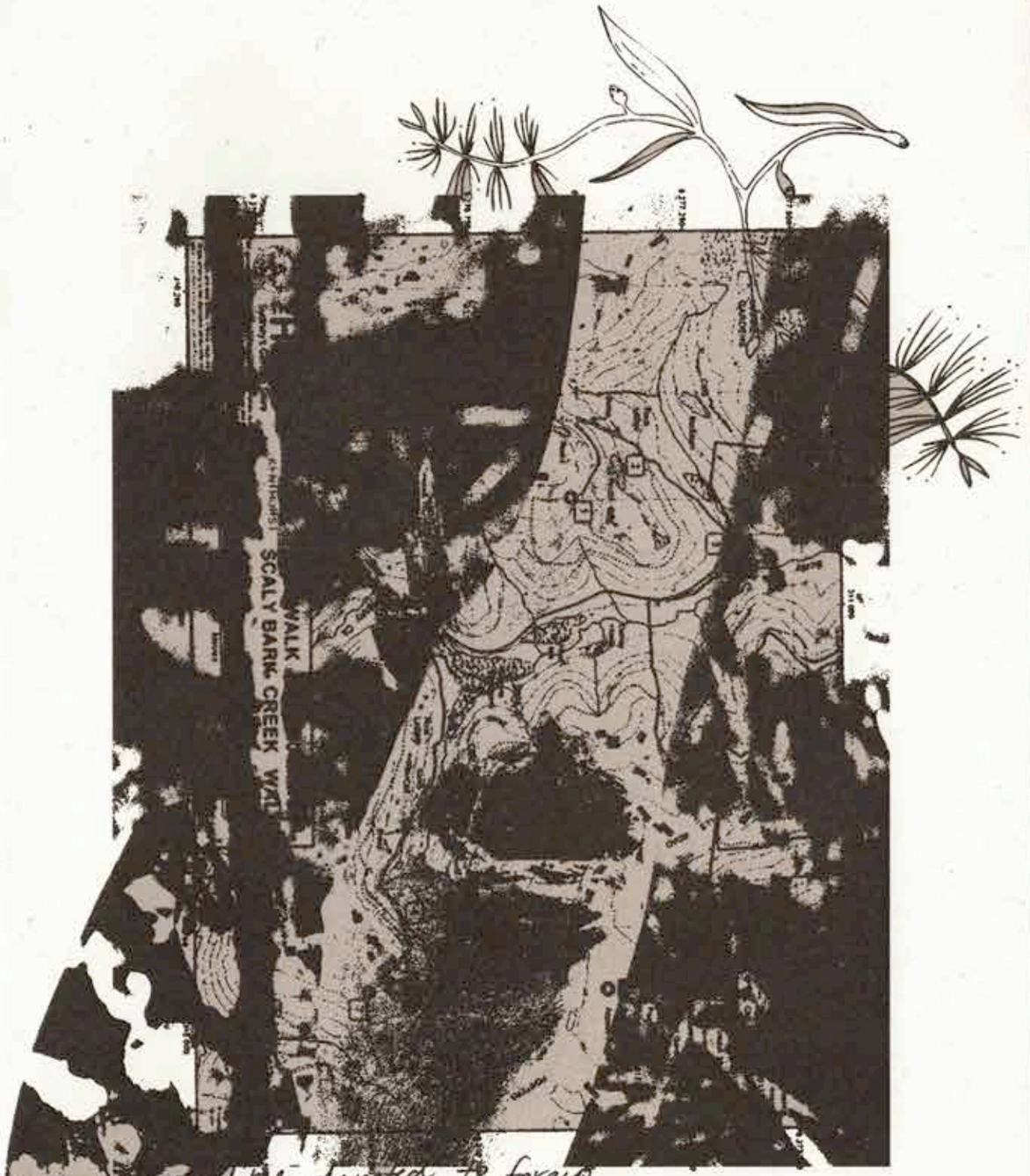
IN HIS CLASSIC STUDY of the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri Forest, Colin Turn-bull observes that the people recognise their dependence on the forest that surrounds them by referring to it as 'Father' or 'Mother'. They do so 'be-cause, as they say, it gives them food, warmth, shelter and clothing, just like their parents', and moreover, 'like their parents, [it] gives them affection' (Turnbull 1965: 19). This form of reference, and the analogy it establishes between the most intimate relations of human kinship and the equally intimate relations between human persons and the non-human environment, is by no means unique to the Mbuti.1 Precisely similar observations have been made among other hunter-gatherers of the tropical forest, in widely separate regions of the world. For example, among the Batek [...] of Malaysia, according to Kirk Endicott, the forest environment 'is not just the physical setting in which they live, but a world made for them in which they have a well-definedpart to play. They see themselves as involved in an intimate relationship of interdependence with the plants, animals and h_a_l_a_' _(including the deities) that inhabit their world' (Endicott 1979: 82). The Hala' are the creator beings who brought the forest world into existence for the people, who protect and care for it, and provide its human dwellers with nourishment. And again, among the Nayaka, forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers of Tamil Nadu, South India, Nurit Bird-David found a similar attitude: 'Nayaka look on the forest as they do on a mother or father. For them, it is not something "out there" that responds mechanically or passively but like a parent, it provides food unconditionally to its children' (Bird-David 1990: 190). Nayaka refer to both the spirits that inhabit the landscape and the spirits of their own predecessors by terms that translate as 'big father' and 'big mother', and to themselves in relation to these spirits as sons and daughters.What are we to make of this? Drawing an explicit parallel between her own Nayaka material and the ethnography of the Batek and Mbuti, Bird-David argues that hunter-gatherer perceptions of the environment are typically

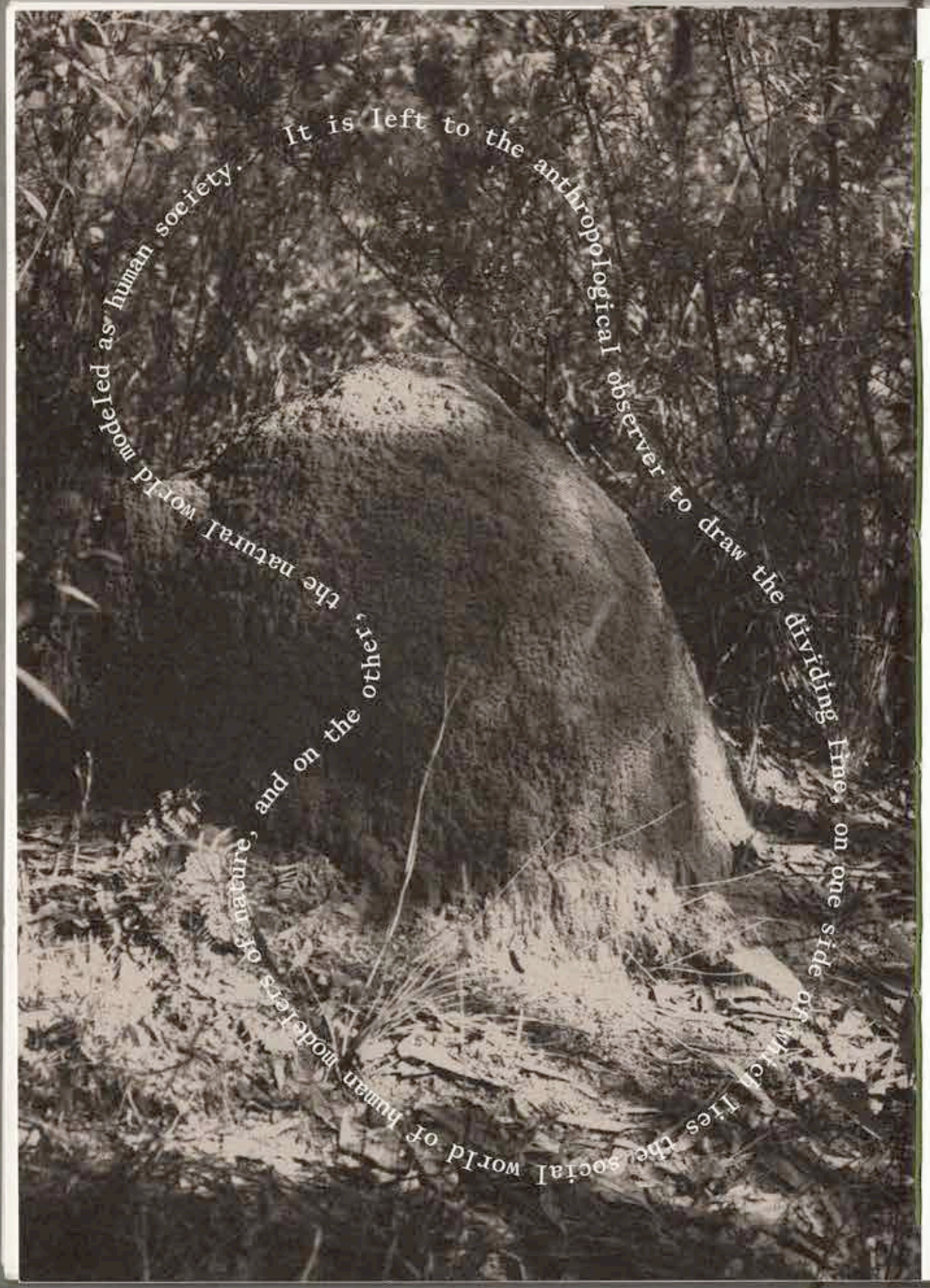


PERVIOUS SPREAD
Lookout from the Perimeter Track, North End near Smiths Creek, Ku-ring-gai National Park.

RIGHT
Mapping my time in Scaly Bark Creek Walk, Bailey Murphy.

oriented by the primary metaphor of the 'forest is as parent', or more generally by the notion that the environment gives the where-withal of life to people – not in return for appropriate conduct, but unconditionally. Among neighbouring populations of cultivators, by contrast, the environ-ment is likened to an ancestor rather than a parent, which yields its bounty only reciprocally, in return for favours rendered. It is this difference in orientation to the environment, she suggests, that most fundamentally distinguishes hunter-gatherers from the cultivators, and it is upheld even when the former draw (as they often do) on cultivated resources and when the latter, conversely, draw on the 'wild' resources of the forest (Bird-David 1990). In a subsequent extension of the argument, and drawing once again on Mbuti, Batek and Nayaka ethnography, Bird-David (1992a) proposes that hunter- gatherers liken the unconditional way in which the forest transacts with people to the similarly unconditional transactions that take place among the people of a community, which in anthropological accounts come under the rubric of sharing. Thus the environment shares its bounty with humans just as humans share with one another, thereby integrating both human and non-human components of the world into one, all-embracing 'cosmic economy of sharing'. But when the hunter-gatherer addresses the forest as his or her parent, or speaks of accepting what it has to offer as one would from other people, on what grounds can we claim that the usage is metaphorical? This is evidently not an interpretation that the people would make themselves; nevertheless – taking her cue from Lakoff and Johnson (1980) – Bird-David argues that these key metaphors enable them to make sense of their envi-ronment, and guide their actions within it, even though 'people may not be normally aware of them' (1992a: 31; 1990: 190, my emphasis). There is a troublesome inconsistency here. On the one hand, Bird-David is anxious to offer a culture-sensitive account of the hunter-gatherer economy, as a counterpoint to the prevailing ecologism of most anthropological work in this field. On the other hand, she can do so only by imposing a division of her own, which forms no part of local conceptions, between actuality and metaphor. Underwriting this division is an assumed separation between two domains: the domain of human persons and social relations, wherein parenting and





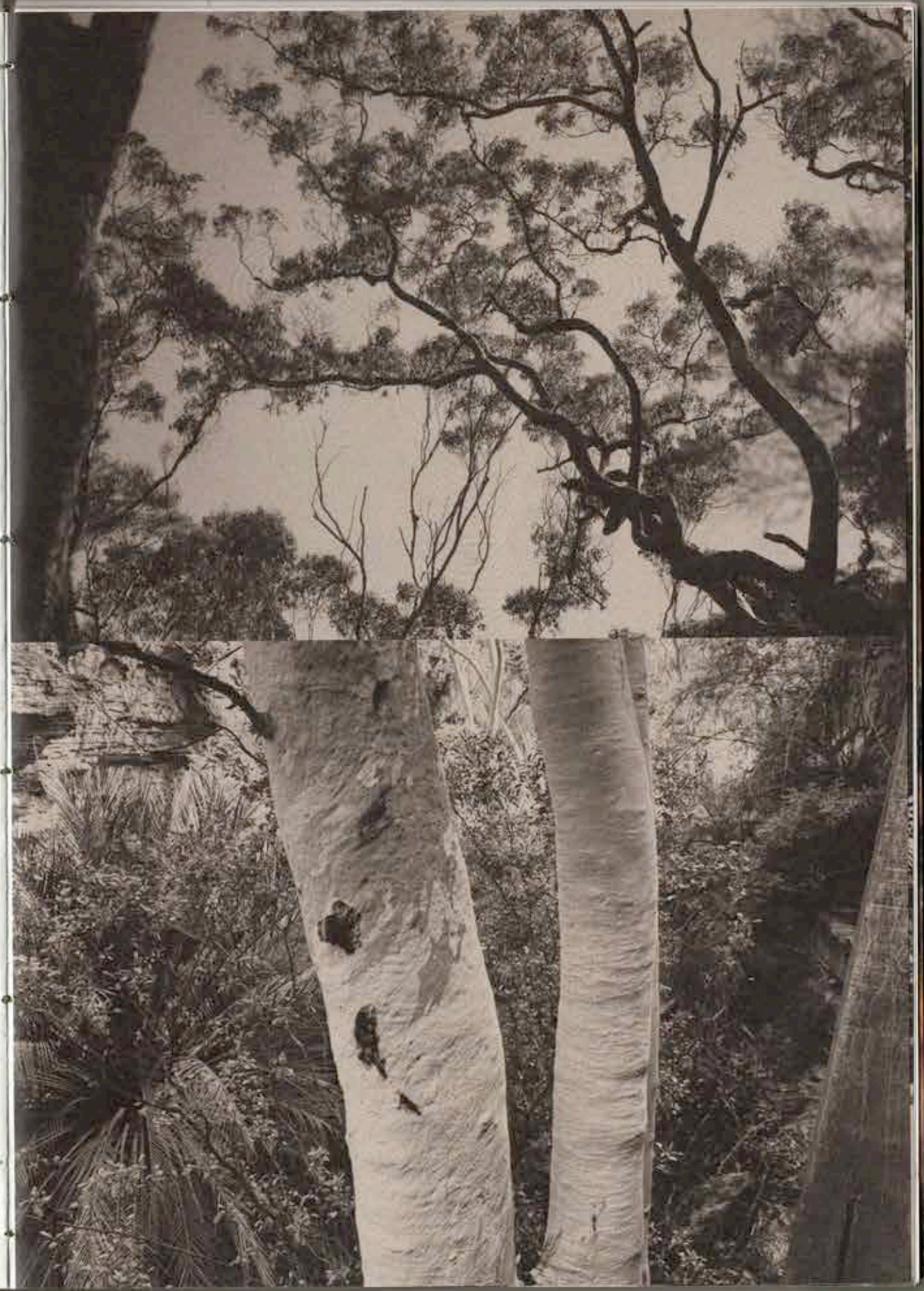
sharing are matters of everyday, commonsense reality; and the domain of the non-human environment, the forest with its plants and animals, relations with which are understood by drawing, for analogy, on those intrinsic to the first domain. In short, hunter-gatherers are supposed to call upon their experience of relations in the human world in order to model their relations with the non-human one. The theoretical inspiration for this analytical tactic comes from Stephen Gudeman (1986), so let us turn to look at how he approaches the matter. Starting from the assumption that 'humans are modelers', Gudeman proposes that 'securing a livelihood, meaning the domain of material "production", "distribution" and "consumption", is culturally modeled in all societies' (1986: 37). Entailed in the notion of modeling is a distinction between a 'schema' which provides a programme, plan or script, and an 'object' to which it is applied: thus 'the model is a projection from the do-main of the schema to the domain of the object' (p. 38). Comparing West-ern and non-Western (or 'local') models of livelihood, Gudeman suggests that in the former, schemas taken from the 'domain of material objects' are typically applied to 'the domain of human life', whereas in the latter the direction of application is reversed, such that 'material processes are mod-eled as being intentional' (pp. 43–4). But notice how the entire argument is predicated upon an initial ontological dualism between the intentional worlds of human subjects and the object world of material things, or in brief, between society and nature. It is only by virtue of holding these to be separate that the one can be said to furnish the model for the other. The implication, however, is that the claim of the people themselves to inhabit but one world, encompassing relations with both human and non-human components of the environment on a similar footing, is founded upon an illusion – one that stems from their inability to recognise where the reality ends and its schematic representation begins. It is left to the anthropolog-ical observer to draw the dividing line, on one side of which lies the social world of human modelers of

TOP RIGHT
Perimeter Track, North End, Terrey Hills, NSW.

BOTTOM RIGHT
Red river gum, Kings Canyon Creek Walk

nature, and on the other, the natural world modeled as human society. In the specific case with which we are concerned, hunter-gatherers' material interactions with the forest environment are said to be modeled on the interpersonal relations of parenting and sharing: the former, assigned to the domain of nature, establish the object; the latter, assigned to the domain of society, provide the schema. But this means that actions and events that are constitutive of the social domain must be representative of the natural. When, for example, the child begs its mother for a morsel of food, that communicative gesture is itself a constitutive moment in the development of the mother–child relationship, and the same is true for the action of the mother in fulfilling the request.

Parenting is not a construction that is projected onto acts of this kind, it rather subsists in them, in the nurture and affection bestowed by adults on their offspring. Likewise, the give and take of food beyond the narrow context of parent–child ties is constitutive of relations of sharing, relations that subsist in the mutuality and companionship of persons in intimate social groups (cf. Price 1975, Ingold 1986a: 116–17). Yet according to the logic of the argument outlined above, as soon as we turn to consider exchange with the non-human environment, the situation is quite otherwise. For far from subsisting in people's practical involvement with the forest and its fauna and flora in their activities of food-getting, parenting and sharing belong instead to a construction that is projected onto that involvement from a separate, social source. Hence, when the hunter-gatherer begs the forest to provide food, as one would a human parent, the gesture is not a moment in the unfolding of relations between humans and non-human agencies and entities in the environment, it is rather an act that says something about these relationships, a represent-ative evaluation or commentary.2 In short, actions that in the sphere of human relations would be regarded as instances of practical involvement with the world come to be seen, in the sphere of relations with the non-human environment, as instances of its metaphorical



RIGHT
Eastern end of the Mueller Track, Wildflower Garden, St Ives.

construction. Yet those who would construct the world, who would be 'modelers' in Gudeman's sense, must already live in it, and life presupposes an engagement with components not only of the human but also of the non-human environment. People need the support and affection of one another, but they also need to eat. How then, to stay with the same argument, do hunter-gatherers deal, rather than metaphorically, with non-human beings in the practical business of gaining a livelihood? They cannot do so in their capacity as persons, since non-human agencies and entities are supposed to have no business in the world of persons save as figures of the anthropomorphic imagination. Hence the domain of their actual interaction with the non-human environment in the procurement of subsistence must lie beyond that of their existence as persons, in a separate domain wherein they figure as biological objects rather than cultural sub-jects, that is as organisms rather than persons. This is the natural domain of organism-environment interactions, as distinct from the social domain of interpersonal relations. This result is indi-cated schematically.There is a profound irony here. Was not the principal objective to counter-act that 'naturalisation of the as hunter-gatherer economy' which, as Sahlins comments (1976: 100), has formed the received anthropological wisdom, in favour of an account sensitive to the nuances of local culture? Yet what we find is that such naturalisation is entailed in the very stance that treats the perception of the environment as a matter of reconstructing the data of experience within intentional worlds. The sphere of human engagement with the environment, in the practical activities of hunting and gathering, is disembedded from the sphere within which humans are constituted as a social beings or persons, as a precondition for letting the latter stand to the former as schema to object. The consequences are all too apparent from the conclusion towards whic Gudeman moves, in bringing his argument to a close: In all living societies humans must maintain themselves by securing energy from the environment. By his own

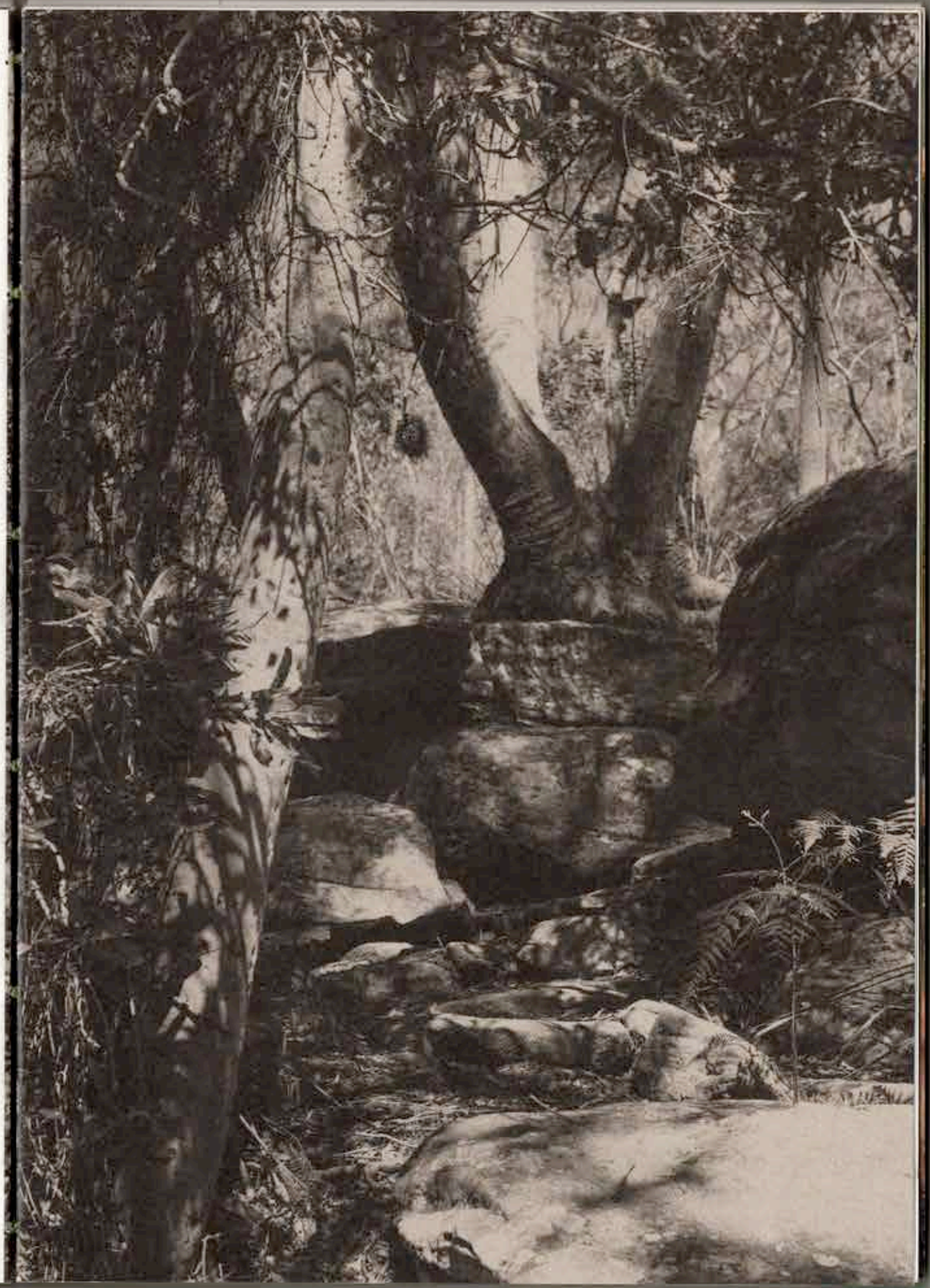


IMAGE
My Mum stepping over puddled path on the Mueller Track, Wildflower Garden, St Ives.

of human beings, shorn of the diverse constructions that are placed upon it, and that 'make something' of it, is nothing more than a rearranging of nature. In this connection, we may recall Sahlins's attempt to treat 'economy' as a 'component of culture', which led him to contrast 'the material life pro-cess of society' to 'a need satisfying process of individual hunting and gathering, by this account, are operations that take place in nature, consisting of interactions between human organisms with 'needs', and environmental resources with the potential to satisfy them. Only after having been extracted is the food transferred to the domain of society, wherein its distribution is governed by a schema for sharing, a schema inscribed in the social relations which the economic practices of sharing serve to reproduce (see Ingold 1988a: 275). In the economy of knowledge, as conceived in general by Gudeman and specifically for hunter- gatherers by Bird-David, what applies to food applies also to sensory ex-perience. That experience, gained through the human as organism–environment interactions, provides the raw material of sensation that – along with food – hunters and gatherers 'take home' with them. Carried over to the domain of interpersonal relations, it too is assimilated to a social schema, to yield a cultural construction of nature such as 'the forest is as parent'. In Figure 3.2 this anthropological conception of the economy of knowledge is contrasted with that of the people themselves. In their account (lower diagram) there are not two worlds, of nature and society, but just one, saturated with personal powers, and embracing both humans, the an-imals and plants on which they depend, and the features of the landscape in which they live and move. Within this one world, humans figure not as composites of body and mind but as undivided beings, 'organism-persons', relating as such both to other humans and to non-human agencies and enti-ties in their environment. Between these spheres of involvement there is no absolute separation,

"That experience, gained through human organism–environment interactions, provides the raw material of sensation that – along with food – hunters and gatherers 'take home' with them."

they are but contextually delimited segments of a single field. As Bird-David observes, hunter-gatherers 'do not inscribe into the nature of things a division between the natural agencies and themselves, as we [Westerners] do with our "nature:culture" dichotomy. They view their world as an integrated entity' (1992a: 29–30). And so one gets to know the forest, and the plants and animals that dwell therein, in just the same way that one becomes familiar with other people, by spending time with them, investing in one's relations with them the same qualities of care, feeling and attention. This explains why hunters and gatherers consider time devoted to forays in the forest to be well spent, even if it yields little or nothing by way of useful return: there is, as Bird-David puts it, 'a concern with the activity itself' (1992a: 30), since it allows people to 'keep in touch' with the non-human environment. And because of this, people know the environment 'intimately, in the way one "knows" close relatives with whom one shares intimate day-to-day life' (Bird-David 1992b: 39). That the perception of the social world is grounded in the direct, mutu-ally attentive involvement of self and other in shared contexts of experience, prior to its representation in terms of received conceptual schemata, is now well established. But in Western anthropological and psychological discourse such involvement continues to be apprehended within the terms of the orthodox dualisms of subject and object, persons and things. Ren-dered as 'intersubjectivity', it is taken to be the constitutive quality of the social domain as against the object world of nature, a domain open to human beings but not to non-human kinds (Willis 1990: 11–12). To speak of the forest as a parent is not, then, to model object relations in terms of primary intersubjectivity, but to recognize that at root, the constitutive quality of intimate relations with non-human and human components of the environment is one and the same.

Bailey Murphy

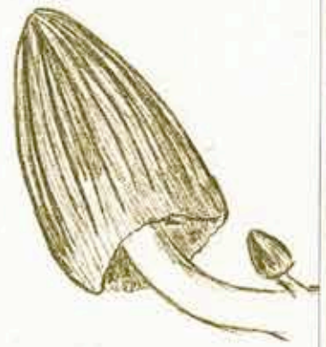
Share Plates

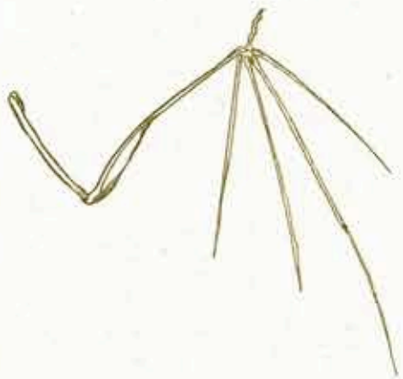
Made in reponse to Tim Ingold's quote:

"Thus the environment shares its bounty with humans just as humans share with one another, thereby integrating both human and non-human components of the world into one, all-embracing cosmic economy of sharing."

Originally printed on recycled Elephant dung paper, print etches made from found things, ink & clay.

This work is a personal design response to Tim Ingold's writing on dwelling and our entanglement with place. I approached the bush track as if it were a shared table, offering its textures, sounds and encounters as if they were dishes on a menu. Each entry, sandstone, shade, pollen, water, is written as a shared plate or drink, emphasising the ways I am in relation with the place rather than observing it from outside. The menu becomes a playful but attentive way to reimagine walking as an act of exchange, where to notice and describe is to share in the life of the land.





CheIsea Steinauer-Scudder

Coming into Being: *Reflections on Mothering in the Apocalypse*

Article originally published in ***Emergence Magazine.***
emergencemagazine.org/essay/coming-into-being/

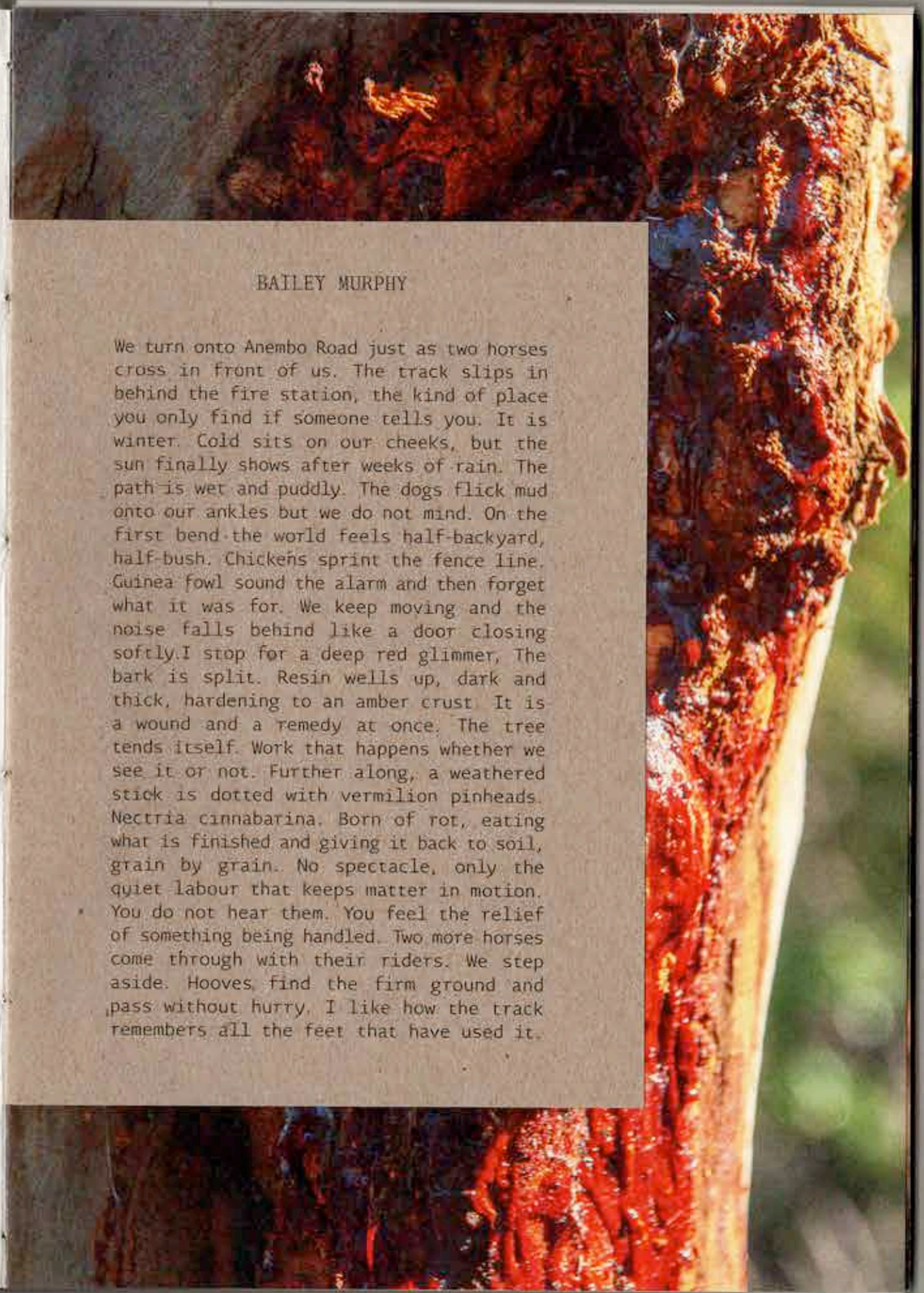
Accompanied by photo essay & short story
by Bailey Murphy

MY FIRST FRAGMENT of memory is of my mother. We are standing together in golden, waving grass. There is the sense that the sun is setting behind us, because what I see in the memory is not our physical bodies but our shadows, cast before us, wavering as the grass bends and circles in the wind. My mother and I are holding hands, and in our silhouettes there is no distinction between where she ends and I begin. And the grass of the rolling plains grows and reaches through our conjoined image. I'm not sure that this memory is of a "real" moment. Probably something like this did happen, whether or not my impression of it is true. When I was one and two years old, we lived on a Nature Conservancy preserve: tens of thousands of acres along the Niobrara River in north-central Nebraska—a landscape of Sandhills prairie, bur oaks, and bison; a landscape of restoration situated within a wider, fraught history of colonization and displacement. Real or not, this image has been with me for a very long time. It has had different things to say to me at different points in my life.

We all have these: encounters or experiences that not only stay with us, but take on more meaning and power over time, thus becoming fixed points around which parts of us will always turn. This memory of my mother is, in its way, a hierophany: a manifestation of the sacred. It is an axis—perhaps an axis mundi—one way of organizing my relationship to sacred space. Since my own daughter's arrival into the world, this particular manifestation has returned to ask me a question: What is it to be a mother in a time of ecological collapse?

It's an early morning at the beginning of April, the day still dark—darker still with a steady rain falling. I turn on the lamp and open the window in my office. It's in the mid-forties, but I love the sound of rain on the plexiglass roof that covers our porch, slanting between my office window and the backyard, where the grass is waking from its Long slumber.

I welcome the rush of cold, damp air and the gentle, pattering hush of water that smells and sings of spring. In the other room, my husband and daughter are



BAILEY MURPHY

We turn onto Anembo Road just as two horses cross in front of us. The track slips in behind the fire station, the kind of place you only find if someone tells you. It is winter. Cold sits on our cheeks, but the sun finally shows after weeks of rain. The path is wet and puddly. The dogs flick mud onto our ankles but we do not mind. On the first bend the world feels half-backyard, half-bush. Chickens sprint the fence line. Guinea fowl sound the alarm and then forget what it was for. We keep moving and the noise falls behind like a door closing softly.I stop for a deep red glimmer. The bark is split. Resin wells up, dark and thick, hardening to an amber crust. It is a wound and a remedy at once. The tree tends itself. Work that happens whether we see it or not. Further along, a weathered stick is dotted with vermilion pinheads. Nectria cinnabarina. Born of rot, eating what is finished and giving it back to soil, grain by grain. No spectacle, only the quiet labour that keeps matter in motion. You do not hear them. You feel the relief of something being handled. Two more horses come through with their riders. We step aside. Hooves find the firm ground and pass without hurry. I like how the track remembers all the feet that have used it.

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BAILEY MURPHY

A baby gum leans into the light, its stem red as a thread. Hanging from it is a tight little cluster of gumnuts, pressed together like siblings. They are still soft and green, lids sealed, each a small room holding a future. Feel how the tree keeps them close until the season turns. Wind will harden them. Heat will open the star lids. Seeds will shake loose and try the ground. My mum points ahead. The bark shifts to a pale green, almost white, washed by weeks of rain. A rosette of lichen spreads across the shade, delicate and enduring. Look close and you can see the partnership. Fungus builds the house and holds the damp. Algae gather light and make the meals. Neither is whole alone.

We keep walking.

listening to John Denver's Rocky Mountain High, a record that we recently recovered from my father-in-law's attic. We've listened to it over and over. In his "Season Suite," on side two, Denver sings these lines that I haven't been able able to get out of my head for weeks: *And oh, I love the life within me*

I feel a part of everything I see
And oh, I love the life around me
a part of everything is here in me

Maybe it seems a bit frivolous, given everything that is going on in 2021, to have been so fixated on this piece of Americana from a 1972 country album. But in this time of spreading disease, with a new baby and our loved ones kept at a painful distance, I think I've needed Denver's unapologetic and joyful affirmation of our connection with something greater than ourselves. Or perhaps these lyrics are pointing me toward this inner-outer aspect of motherhood that I'm struggling to understand: How the boundaries of my individual body have blurred. How Aspen's gestation began a mysterious process of osmosis that I can't fully comprehend. How her arrival expanded my understanding of ritual as something ancient, bodily, animal, as, together, we underwent the initiation of birth.

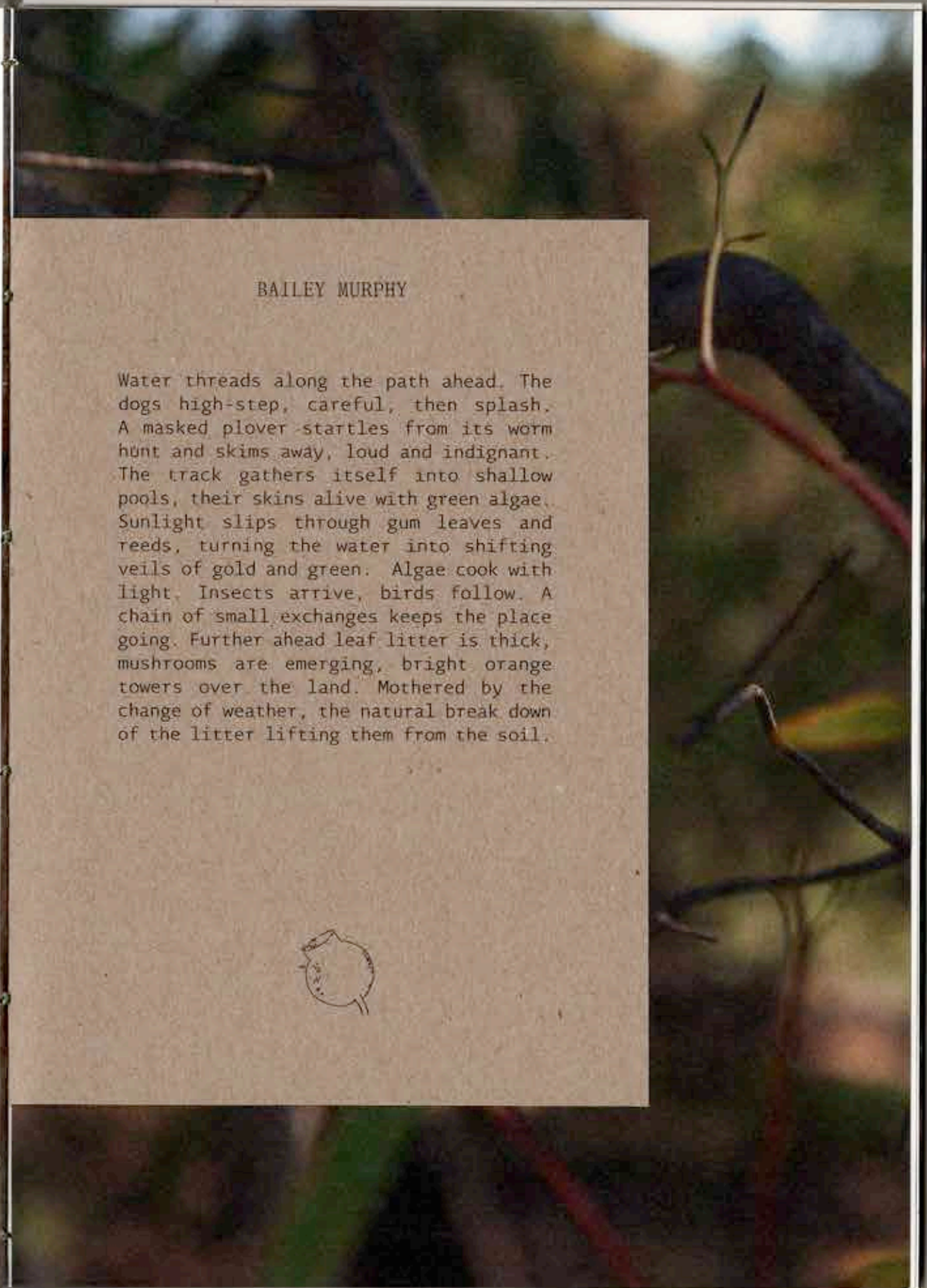
My desire to untangle my felt sense of interconnection from my entrenched mental concept of individualism has continued into motherhood, albeit in a variety of new ways. At six months old, I muse to myself, Aspen is the only one in our small family who truly understands Denver's lyrics. In this time of ecological unraveling and cultural disorientation, the present, trusting attentiveness of this child intuits that which I only experience glimpses of, before I then think about it, my critical mind taking things into the realm of abstract thought. I always have to stop and remind—or re-body—myself; my senses have to chase this intuition through a fog of conditioning and concepts. Aspen is this intuition. Every morning she wakes to greet a world that greets her back. She takes it all in with generous attention and curiosity. She is startled, she is awed,

she is frightened, she is patient. There is a fluidity to the boundaries of her being. She is a willing pupil of a world that, in every moment, rises anew to meet her.

In my mid-thirties, I have come up in a Western culture that has taught me to look back on my life with the reverse perspective: the world does not continually rise anew; it is already there, almost a foregone conclusion, with the inevitable, linear drive of human history behind it. "Nature," Western culture tells me again and again, is separate from "me" and operates apart from my enlightened, rational, human reality. I am the doer; the Earth is acted upon.

The A:shiwi (Zuni) elder and farmer Jim Enote tells the story of how his great-grandparents awoke every morning before dawn to say a prayer to help the sun rise. He expresses regret that the science-based mindset of our time makes it extraordinarily difficult to be a twenty-first-century person and still hold such beliefs. It's not that Jim is anti-science. It's that he mourns the loss of this infused intuiting of reciprocity. The widespread loss of the belief that the world needs our prayers and attention—and might not rise to greet us without them—is a tolling bell for the species and ecosystems that have vanished or been pushed to the brink. I'm remembering Jim's story as I hear Aspen babbling away in the other room. I mourn how violently Western culture has stomped out this intuition ... But then I am struck: Aspen's world *is coming into being.* My god, I realize, she has not yet been taught to forget.I attend a workshop in which cultural ecologist David Abram speaks about animism as the "spontaneous experience of how the world reveals itself to us."

He says: "If you allow that everything has vitality and agency, then you notice that everything is expressive." Everything, he says, has meaningful speech. The sound of this morning's rain enters Aspen's consciousness. What does she hear? What is the sound of rain without the word for rain? I don't know. I hear this sound, and while I want to stay present, I find myself led from the word "rain" to fretting about a winter that was too warm and a spring that came



BAILEY MURPHY

Water threads along the path ahead. The dogs high-step, careful, then splash. A masked plover startles from its worm hunt and skims away, loud and indignant. The track gathers itself into shallow pools, their skins alive with green algae. Sunlight slips through gum leaves and reeds, turning the water into shifting veils of gold and green. Algae cook with light. Insects arrive, birds follow. A chain of small exchanges keeps the place going. Further ahead leaf litter is thick, mushrooms are emerging, bright orange towers over the land. Mothered by the change of weather, the natural break down of the litter lifting them from the soil.

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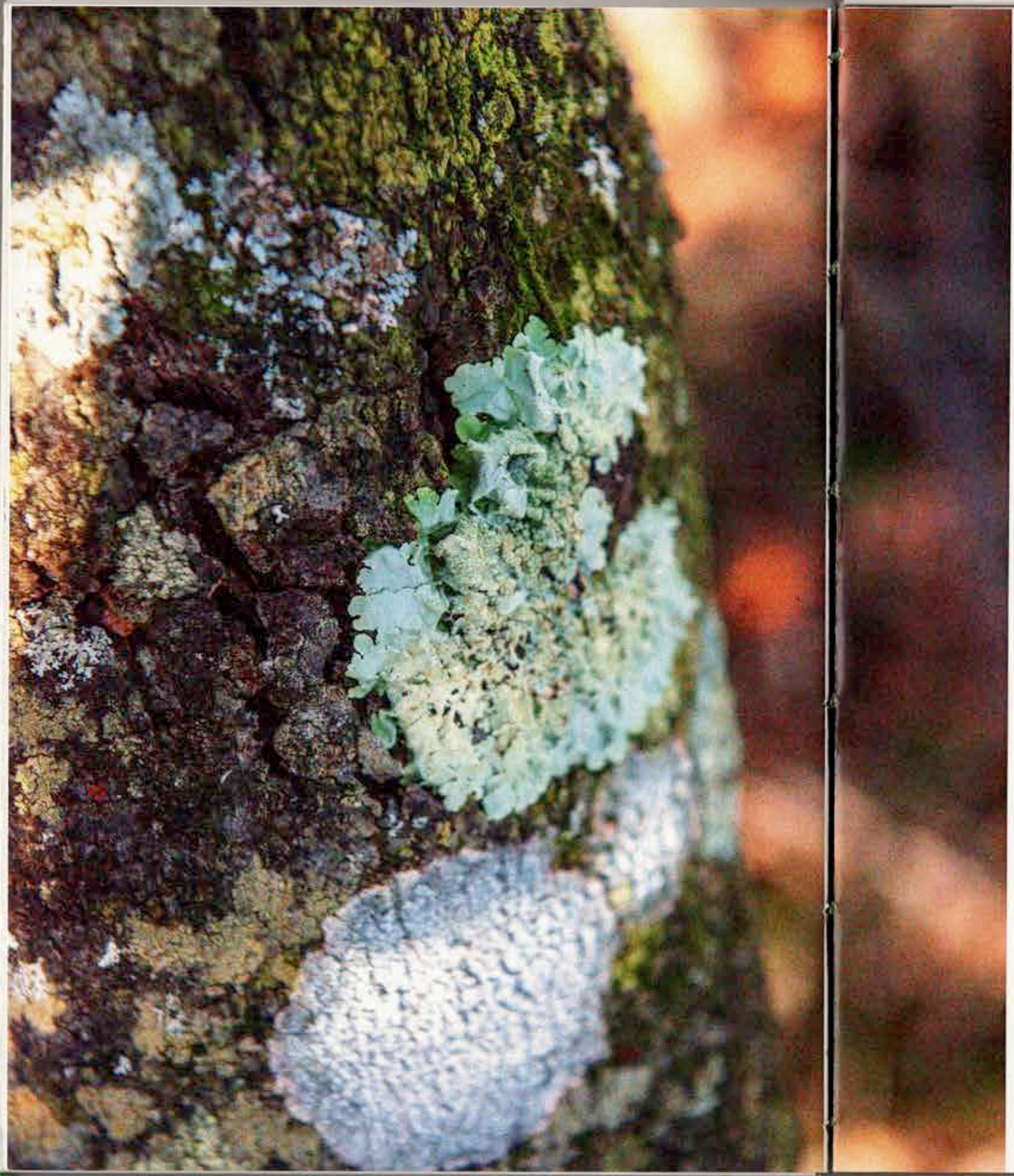
BAILEY MURPHY

Under our feet, small mounds of ochre soil ring a dozen neat doorways. Ant country. The surface is quiet and then, if you wait, it is not. Workers lift grains, pass them, vanish. Others return with seeds and pale crumbs. The track we walk on sits over a city.Care here is built into the ground. Tunnels carved, chambers aired, brood moved to the right temperature and back again. Bodies swap jobs as the day asks. Nothing heroic. Just a network that keeps living things alive. I gasp stopping at Fragile wings folded against the wind, still clinging after flight has ended. Even in its passing, it offers sustenance for others, insects, soil, and time. A reminder that care is cyclical: to live, to feed, to be held by place, and in turn to nourish what comes next.



too early. As Charles Foster says: "When I think I've described a wood, I'm really describing the creaking architecture of my own mind."1

In a Western capitalist culture that feels so irreversibly conditioned to its own internal logic, its own seemingly unstoppable momentum, its own ego, its own monied tongue—all of which have wrapped their threads around me, too—I can hardly believe that thirty feet away from me in the other room, beneath the rain that runs down the roof, is a human being who is currently free of this conditioning. I wonder how, as a mother, I can nurture this freedom. We read books to Aspen and sing to her. I speak to her in my halting, intermediate French, hoping she might have some sense of another (human) language, even if my pronunciation is rusty. But listening to the rain this morning, I feel a little tug of resistance in giving her these human words at all. Aspen has started making what seem to be her first intentional attempts at language. All day she says, "na-na-na-na ... ba-ba-ba," which Andrew and I of course interpret as "ma-ma" and "da-da." But mostly she makes these sounds without any particular attention to either one of us. She spontaneously expresses herself as she explores, discovers. The sounds she makes are mostly in conversation with something other than us. She, like all infants, is a little animist in an animate world.

On mornings like this, I remind myself to be silent. *I remind myself to give her ample space to listen to a much wider, deeper, more complex language than that which emerges from my own trained tongue.* It is within this wide space of silence that I can witness the way my daughter meets Rain. It is in stillness that I can ask, What realities are possible at this meeting place of the world and our perception of it? And I suppose that what is possible is this: that the meeting place itself might blur, and then disappear.

In a moment, I'll close my computer and turn off the light, and I'll bring her out to the porch. I'll try to pull myself out of my mind. We'll stand under the plexiglass roof and listen to the birth of

spring—as dynamic as the drops that are falling in ever new patterns from the gray sky like little prayers. Together, we'll witness a world coming into being.

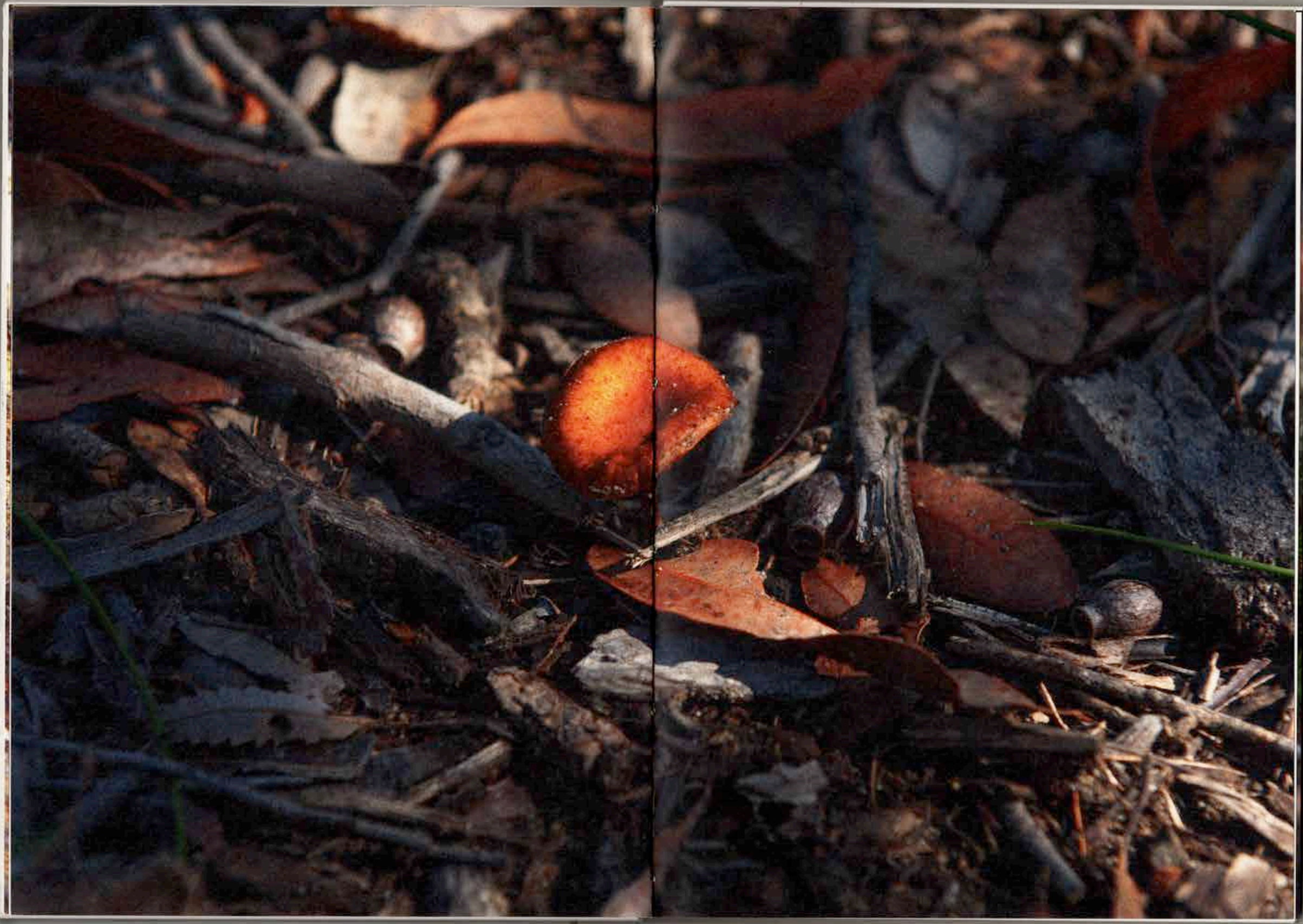
So many of the stories we hear today are about a world falling out of being. Falling away. Falling from grace. Twenty-three more species declared extinct. Floods and fires. Vanishing topsoil. Climate refugees. These are stories of the mass-scale unraveling that is taking place as we pull more and more threads out of the Earth's great pattern to weave something that is entirely of our own making, an image that reflects only ourselves. *We continue this hungry work even as the stunted design we are creating spellsour own demise.*

In Linda Hogan's book Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World, she travels to the Boundary Waters, where a group of ecologists is working to study and help restore a slowly recovering population of wolves. Linda is there with some visitors who have come to tour the region, ---------- with the hope of glimpsing a wolf in its native habitat. But the first glimpse of a wolf that they get is in the form of a carcass, pulled out of the back of a pickup truck. Many of these visitors are neither ecologists nor what one might classify as conservationists. Some hunt and trap wolves, others are afraid of them. But Linda is struck by the fact that every one of them cannot resist the urge to reach out and stroke the pelt of this animal, to "touch a lost piece of the wild earth." *To connect with something that we have severed from ourselves.*

On the last night of their tour, the group is out in the woods and it has turned dark. They still have not seen a living wolf. And then a long howl breaks through the moonlight. A hush falls over them as they seek the source of the sound. They realize it's coming from one of the men in their party. He howls again "in a language he only pretends to know," and the group of people surrounding him—as well as the woods, and the world beyond—answer with silence. Linda writes: "We wait. We are waiting for the wolves to answer. We want a healing, I think, a cure for anguish, a remedy that will heal the wound between us and the world

that contains our broken histories."

Is it possible, I wonder, to build a bridge between these broken histories and an uncertain, deeply troubled future? Here are the paradoxes that I hold as a new mother: *I believe that the world can simultaneously fall out of being and come into being.* I believe that the cracks and chasms of our fragmenting civilization will widen and deepen in my lifetime and certainly in our daughter's; and I believe that bringing new life into a world in collapse is still a morally sound choice (and that the decision not to bring new life into the world is morally sound, as well). I believe that even our limited languages might lead us—if we continue to listen and reach for knowing—to a truer expression. I don't believe there is any cure for our anguish that will stop our present downfall; but I do believe there is a cure. *The cure, the healing, is that which will bring us back into a deep, loving, entwined relationship with the living world.* And this, I believe, is the work of mothering. By "mother" I do not mean the noun that refers to females with a uterus and children. I mean everyone—of any gender, any age, any species. I mean people, trees, robins, and rivers. As Robin Wall Kimmerer writes in Braiding Sweetgrass, "A good mother ... [knows] that her work doesn't end until she creates a home where all of life's beings can flourish." I mean "mother" as a verb, and "mothering" as the good work of being in service to "all of life's beings." I don't pretend to know what the future will look like. But I believe that, more than anything, the apocalypse will need mothers. What is a mothering orientation and practice in a time of great uncertainty? There is no one answer of course. There are spaces of stillness and silence. There is the annual flood of nutrients that washes over the riverbank and into thirsty wetlands. There is ritual and ceremony. There is the spider who carries her hatchlings on her back. There is listening. There are the Mother Trees that Suzanne Simard studies, who recognize and care not only for their kin, but for "strangers too, and other species, promoting the diversity of the community."



a writer, I tend to gravitate toward practices of words and stories. This is often where my mind goes when I think of mothering my daughter.

Sometimes, when that memory of my mother and I standing in the grass returns to me, I can't stop thinking about shadows.

A recent article in The New Yorker, "Green Dream," yanks a knot in my stomach that has been tightening for some time. Is limitless clean energy finally approaching? reads the subtitle. It's a story about nuclear-fusion energy which promises, among other things, "a carbon-free way to power a household for a year on the fuel of a single glass of water"—if only scientists could at last figure out how to safely unleash this unending source of energy. I won't pretend to understand nuclear fusion. Perhaps it could in fact be a "solution at the scale of the problem," as one aerospace engineer says. (Though I suspect not.

This is a telling misunderstanding: that the climate crisis is wholly a problem of science with an as-yet undiscovered scientific solution. But it is our separation from the Earth herself that lies at the heart of our crisis, and thus, in my opinion, the work of healing must primarily be the work of spirit. But these are the gospels of our scientific age: "Clean" alternatives mean we can keep living like we're currently living. We can keep consuming. We can keep ignoring that separation, that collective lack of center.)No, what is troubling me is not nuclear fusion, but that word: limitless. What is troubling me is a language that is entrenched in anthropocentrism.

These are the shadows that can sometimes paralyze me: shadows that impose, shadows that are dark sides, shadows that block the light, shadows that desire to cast our own image onto the land. As a writer, I see the way that those sorts of shadows often take the form of words. I notice the way that I, too, employ them. A mothering language is one that strives to bring the world into being through story.

In Myths to Live By, Joseph Campbell writes that it was the Greeks who shifted the center of our

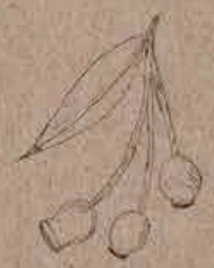
collective awe from the greater-than-human world to man himself. Thus drama and myth in Western storytelling came to revolve around the plight of the individual human being, and this became the accepted frame of our myths. David Abram convincingly claims it was the alphabet that broke the - - - - - - animistic bonds that had kept us in constant dialogue with the nonhuman beings around us and instead placed us under an utterly self-referential spell through which we came to express ourselves in ways that only we could understand, thus closing ourselves off from that wider, woven conversation. With the Enlightenment came a parade of thinkers and explorers who parsed the world into its rational parts and used words to document, explain, and justify that parsing. Obviously, a great deal of scientific knowledge is unquestionably valuable, astounding, lifesaving.

I certainly depend upon it. *But, along the way, our collective knowing forgot that we are beings of, among, and dependent upon a living Earth and oriented itself around human supremacy (leading to, among other things, white supremacy and patriarchy).* Language perpetuates such consciousnesses. "The English language can wield our collective shadow like a weapon," I write. And that feels like a very satisfying thought. The critical part of my mind likes to sink my teeth into words like "limitless" and shake them around, asserting that such notions of hubris will only result in our self-destruction. But this is only another violence. This is my own shadow at work. It's a frame of the problem that is built by the very forgetting and separation that plague our collective consciousness.

Many have thought and written about this and there is no need to go into great detail here. But the questions I'm concerned with are: *How and where within this structure do we locate a language of mothering? Can mothering utilize Western languages toward another end? Are there different ways to think about shadows? Different dimensions?* And this is when the image of my mother and I in the grass returns to me again. With a profound lightness, with a shushing wind, it asks me to look closer.

BAILEY MURPHY

We almost miss it. At ground level a small mushroom lifts through the leaf litter, its amber cap catching the low sun. Around it the tangle of sticks, soil and fallen eucalyptus leaves feels like a whole neighbourhood, quietly alive. Threads travel where we cannot see, feeding and being fed. This is mothering underground: exchange, recycling, a shared pantry made from what has fallen. We crouch, breathe, step wide so the cap stays whole, and carry on.



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BAILEY MURPHY

We round a bend and find a tree that fell and kept on living. Its trunk has bent and scarred into a low arc, a cradle of bark and shadow. In the hollow, insects work, soil gathers, leaves settle and turn sweet.

We duck beneath a sandstone wall and the air cools. A miniature forest clings to the face of the rock. Moss and tiny ferns, green spines drinking from the seams. They cup water, shelter spores, soften the heat. Insects thread through the shade and the stone holds still under their cover. A slow blanket that protects, cushions, and makes room for life where bare rock could not. The track tilts toward the road. Dogs shake, light thins.

mothering utilize Western languages toward another end? Are there different ways to think about shadows? Different dimensions? And this is when the image of my mother and I in the grass returns to me again. With a profound lightness, with a shushing wind, it asks me to look closer.

Look again at your shadows there in the grass, it says. So I look. And here is what I see: That when my mind is critical, it is prone to forgetting—even resisting—love. Because loving a world that is collapsing can be too painful. But, there in my memory, I see that our shadows have lain down ahead of us, not to shade out the grass, not to make our mark, but to be with the grass, and the grass ---------- is dancing through us. There is no pain. There is no imposition. Instead, there is an easy and full love between my mother and me.

And I can't see where my mother ends and I begin and where I end and my daughter begins; and I think this melding must be true, too, for where our shadows end and the grass begins. And when the word "limitless" comes to me this time, it alights softly and waits.

Aspen, too, continues to teach me about ways of using language that open us to that which is beyond language. She turned one in early September. Her first human word is Hi!, which she says, every time, with that exclamation point. (Her other first word was a dog-word: woh woh! in response to dogs barking). "Hi!" she says to the willow tree as she pets its bark and shakes its leaves. "Hi!" she says to the neighbor's sheep, bleating in their pasture. "Hi!" to ants, crows, stuffed animals, fruit flies, and our Portland Seadogs novelty bobblehead. "Hi!" she says, occasionally, even to people. Everyone thinks this is very cute—which, of course, it is. As her mother, I can confidently say that just about everything she does is cute. But other people often think it's cute because, in her endearingly naive way, she doesn't yet know that, in our culture, we don't say "hi" like this to anything that's not a person.

But her father and I think that her greetings are, in fact, radical. This wasn't something we taught her. And it's something we've seen plenty of other children do. Their innate intuition ascribes personhood—thou, not it—to every being they encounter. Aspen does not discriminate. She delights in the inherent being of all creatures. What a simple act that carries so much awareness and recognition! For me, that this inclination

is still present in the open minds and imaginations of children, even twenty-first-century Western ones, holds so much more promise and potential for our salvation as a species than the theories of nuclear scientists who are working on fusion.

"Hi!" is now a family practice—together we greet crab apples, blackberries, the osprey that dives into the churning sea, the quiet shell on the beach, each other, the dewy morning, and the brisk evening. There is a lot of talk today about the ways in which our modern, Western stories are not working. Certainly not the stories of capitalism and progress. Not even the stories of environmentalism. I agree. But I stumble a bit when there is talk of the new stories we need. I mostly agree with this, too, but I wonder how to tell stories—new or old—from a rooted, grounded place.

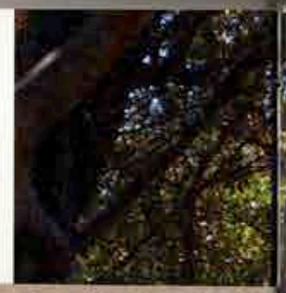
Where are these stories when you come from such a malnourished culture? We have a great deal to learn from our Indigenous teachers: whose voices we ought to center. But even with our best intentions, we also ought to be very cautious of plucking Indigenous stories from their own cultural ecosystems. There is a difference between learning and transplanting. I don't know that we can simply pull stories from others' rooted traditions and fold them into our own.

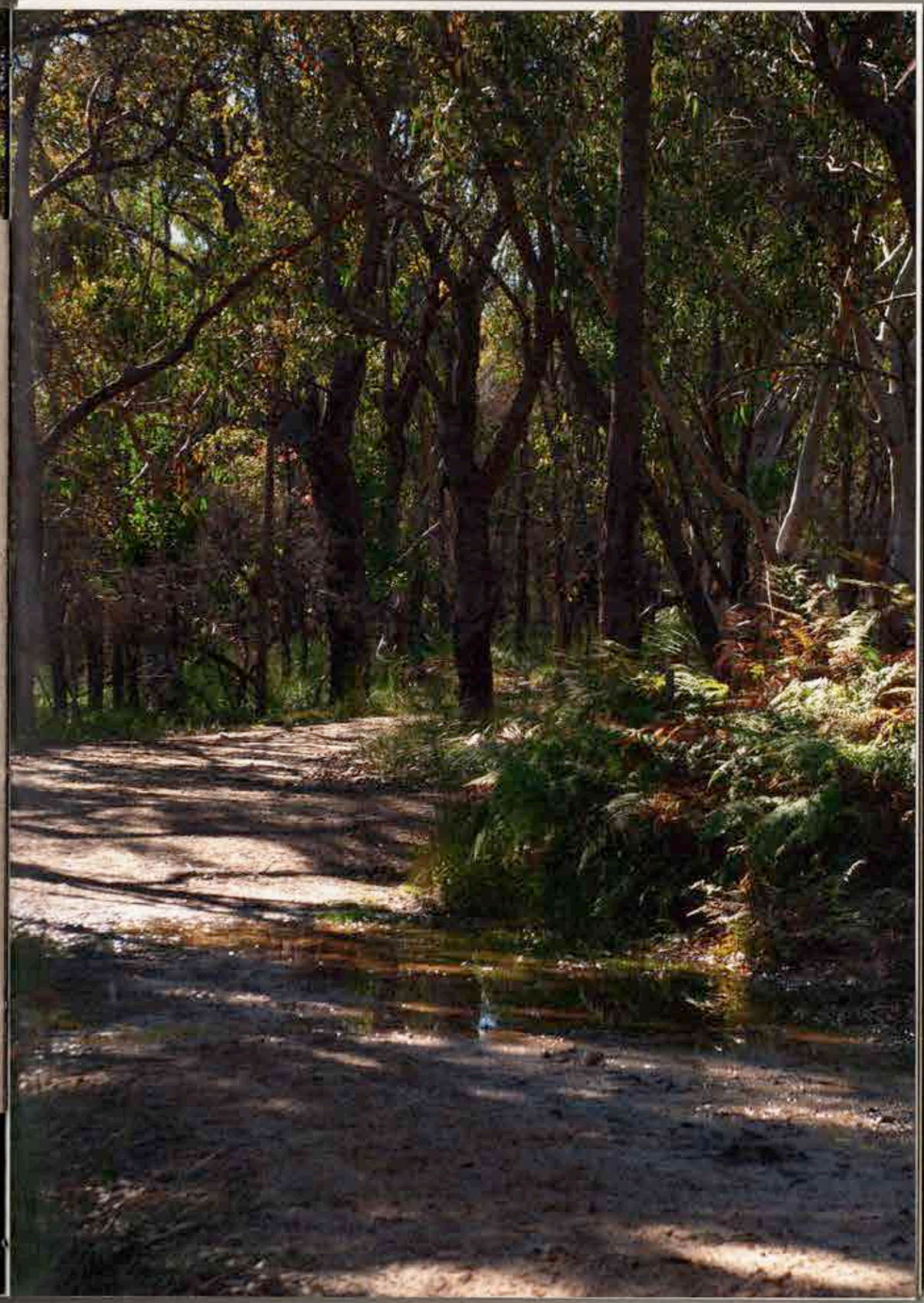
We might turn to our own wisdom and religious traditions. After a few years of studying comparative religion, it was abundantly clear to me that our diverse faith traditions each carry stories, symbols, and rituals that, as Joseph Campbell says, speak to us "of matters fundamental to ourselves, enduring essential principles about which it would be good for us to know; about which, in fact it will be necessary for us to know if our conscious minds are to be kept in touch with our own most secret, motivating depths": the makings of myth. Of course, the expression of that wisdom—and the way in which myth works on our conscious and subconscious minds—is influenced by the present-day culture in which it is situated. But part of the power of ancient traditions is that they

BAILEY MURPHY

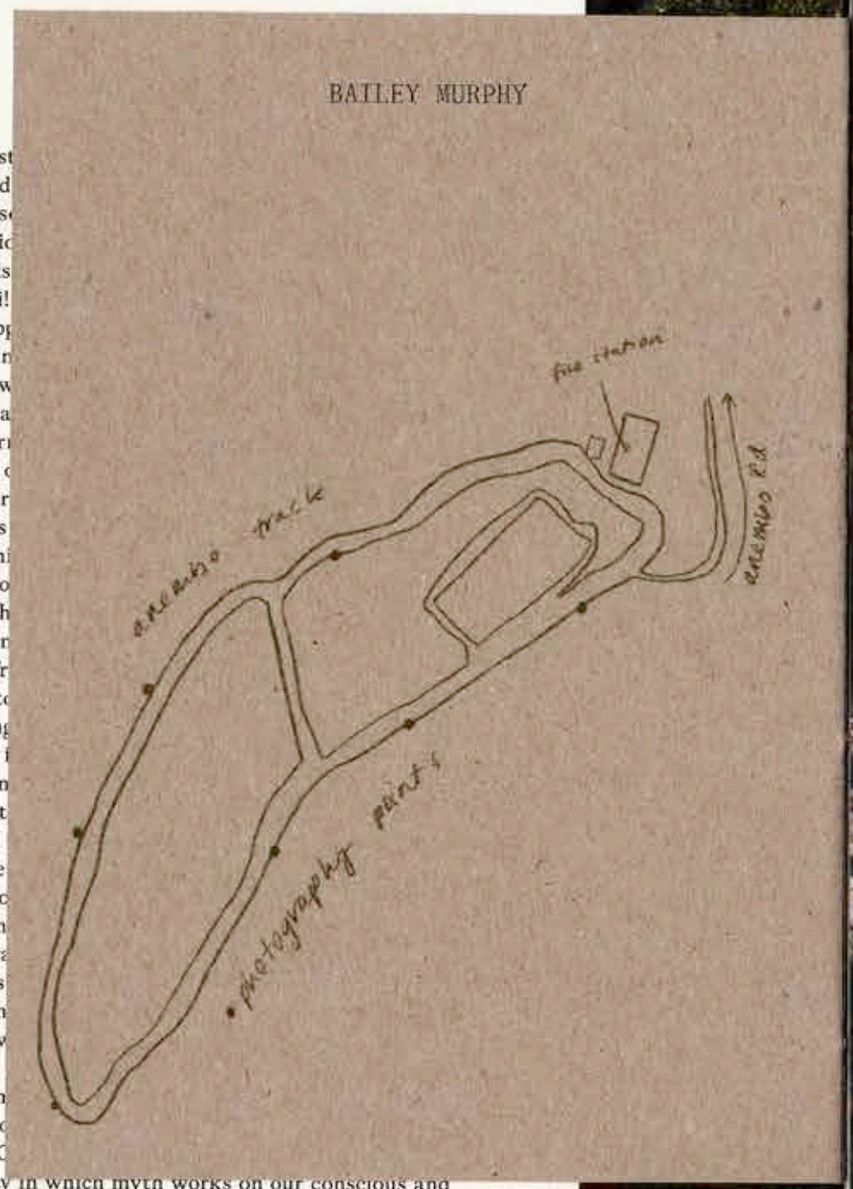
At the last bend we notice them. A neat
cluster of tiny eggs on the underside of
a leaf, pale beads set like careful dots.
We look, we leave them, and keep on.
The track gives way to bitumen. Boots
knocked clean, dogs shake.

We slide into the car with the windows
down. Wood smoke threads the cool evening
and slips through the cabin. The hill
falls behind, the sky fades, and the day
settles. We carry home what stuck to us
anyway. A smell of smoke. A smear of mud.
A few small scenes that will last longer
than our footprints.





BAILEY MURPHY



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the way in which myth works on our conscious and subconscious minds—is influenced by the present-day culture in which it is situated. But part of the power of ancient traditions is that they

speak to something archetypal and evergreen within the human experience and can be drawn upon again and again. I have seen many recent examples of people doing the work of healing our separation from the Earth, specifically through the myth, ~~~~~~~~ symbols, and rituals of their religious traditions: Buddhist monks ordaining trees in Cambodia to protect them from logging; my dear friend Steve Blackmer's Church of the Woods, where the eucharist is offered to people, ferns, and black bears alike; the Kanaka Maoli in Hawai'i protesting development on the sacred mountain of Mauna Kea, the firstborn child of Wākea and Papa in the Hawai'ian creation chant; examples abound. But again, these symbols and rituals can be difficult to fully access if we are not of these traditions. This is, I think, when we can turn to ~~ place itself: the places that have shaped and molded us. The places that we are in deep relationship with. The places that are, or can become, our axis mundi, our sacred centers. *A mothering language is one that strives to bring the world into being through story.* It reaches for a space in our collective imagination where all of life's beings find their home. This means that in addition to listening for the human stories that root our traditions, and in addition to listening to the stories that come through the innate knowing of our children, we must also seek out and tell the stories of the land itself. As creatures born of this Earth, we must tell the stories of the landscapes that have shaped and held us. As mothers, we can practice listening to the voice of the land and allow ourselves to be vessels that share that voice with others. If we are to make a home for all of life's beings, both in our actions and in our stories, then we must listen not only for our human stories, but for stories of land and place. Where does the story of the land intersect our own histories?

These stories will always be deeply imperfect as they are translated through human language. We will fret about how they are prone to our projections and our biases, our egos and our limited minds. But I hope we will not allow these worries to silence us. *Telling these stories through a language of mothering can stretch us toward something greater.* Let us end, then, with one such story from this mother:

Who was River as she found her shape
so many millennia ago? She was, for one, a home for many
different waters. Meltwater. Rainwater. Stream water.
Aquifer water. These waters came from many
different places: Sky. Stream. Dune. And the
dark, damp of the Belowground.
But the true majesty of
River was this: as she welcomed more
and more water, and as that water flowed faster
and faster, River became a
time weaver. Picture in your mind: River's waters were always
flowing, flowing. Sometimes as steady
and wide as a soft line of cloud. Sometimes
tumbling, cascading, and splashing over stone on
her way. As these different dances of water
were moving over the land, they picked up and carried
with them, bit by bit, little pieces of the land.
They took sediment and sandstone,
chalk and ash, shell and bone.
As they did, as the water carved its valley,
River etched her way through ancient
layers of the past and thus reached

further and further back into time:
Through the sand dunes that were laid down
and shaped by wind. Into the sand
and ash of the Ash Hollow formation.
Next into the soft, off-white sandstone
of the Valentine formation, where the
water uncovered the bones of saber-toothed deer and giant
tortoise. Then through the siltstone of the Rosebud formation,
until the waters reached all the way down
to Pierre Shale and its millions-year-old fossils
of uncanny beasts, like the ammonite and
the thick-bodied plesiosaur.
All of these layers of time were
folded into the current and
carried away. And thus,
River wove the past
into the present. But here is something even more
extraordinary: as River's waters surfaced the
past and pulled it into the current, the stage
was simultaneously set for the future. The exposed
siltstone of the Rosebud became home
to a bur oak savannah that was able to grow
because of spring seeps that emerged from the
south canyon wall of River's valley.

Mothering can be dispersed.
It can be shared between
species, places, and systems.

It is shelter in a hollowed tree,
fungi binding roots, a bird
brooding eggs not its own.

It can mean stepping back,
loosening the human grip, and
recognising care already at
work.

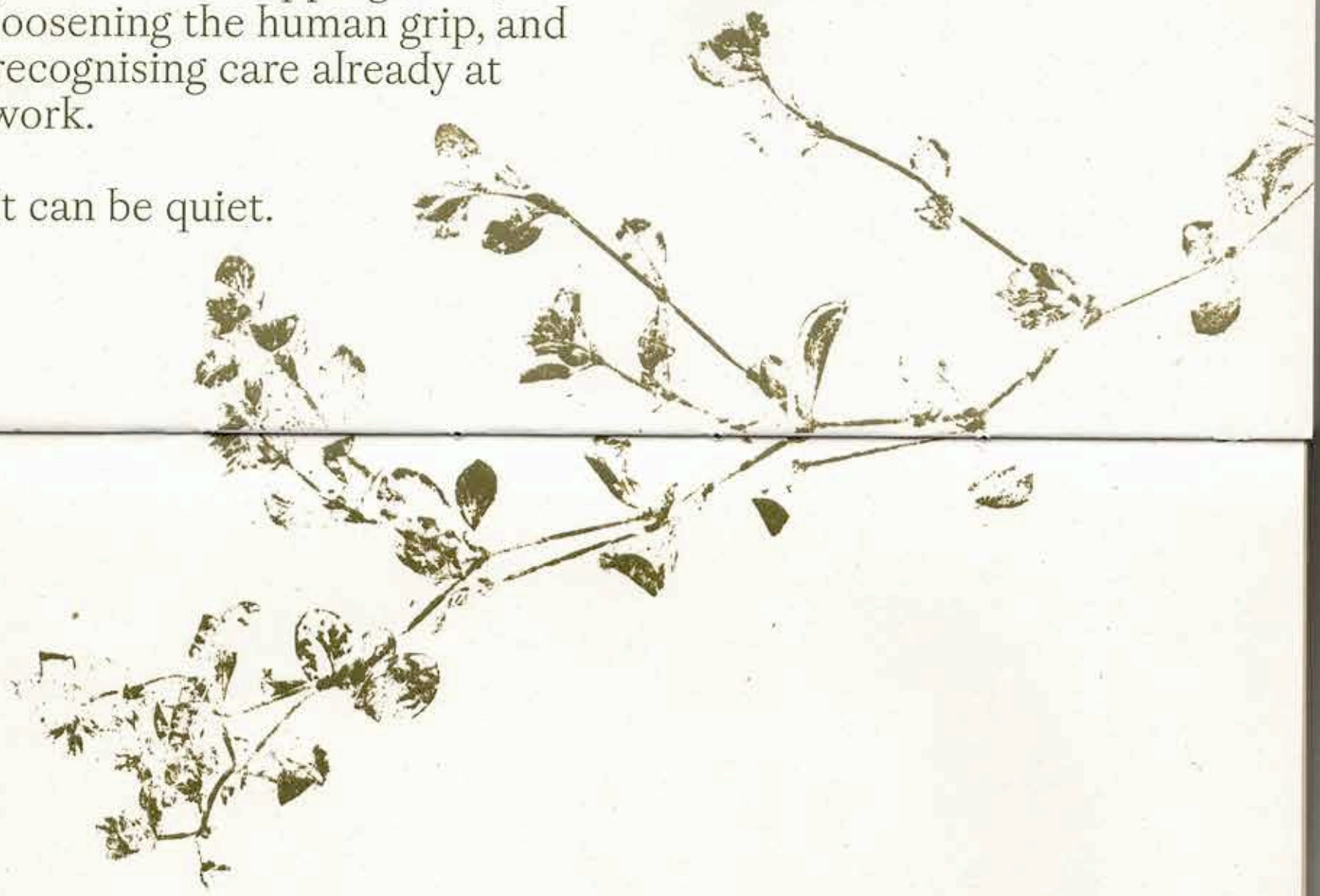
It can be quiet.

It can be reciprocal.

It can be a way of noticing
that we are not alone in
holding life.

This too is mothering.

It matters.



③

MOTHERING

As A New Language

MOTHERING AS LANGUAGE [phrase]
1. A mode of storytelling that gives voice to both human and non-human worlds.
2. The use of words, metaphors, and narratives as acts of care, translating relation, kinship, and responsibility across species and environments.
3. A way of holding space through language: listening to the stories the land tells, protecting rivers, naming futures, and making a home for all beings.

If mothering could be more than reproduction, then perhaps we need a new language to describe it, one that stretches beyond the human, one that includes the land itself. Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder speaks of "mothering language": a way of storytelling that makes space for both human and non-human voices. She reminds us that if we are to build a home for all beings, we must listen not only to our own histories but also to the stories the land is telling. What if protecting a river is an act of mothering? What if mothering is not about creating life, but about holding space for it? As designers, we can practice this by experimenting with forms of language that expand who gets to speak and be heard, through typography that echoes natural rhythms, visual narratives that centre more-than-human stories, or design methods that translate care into form. Design becomes a way of mothering when it holds space, nurtures relation, and resists the urge to dominate. This chapter sits with those questions. It is less about definition than about translation, how language, in both words and design, can carry care, kinship, and relation across the boundaries we are used to drawing.

RIGHT
'Threaded', Bailey Murphy

Donna J. Haraway

Camille 3

Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene, 2016.

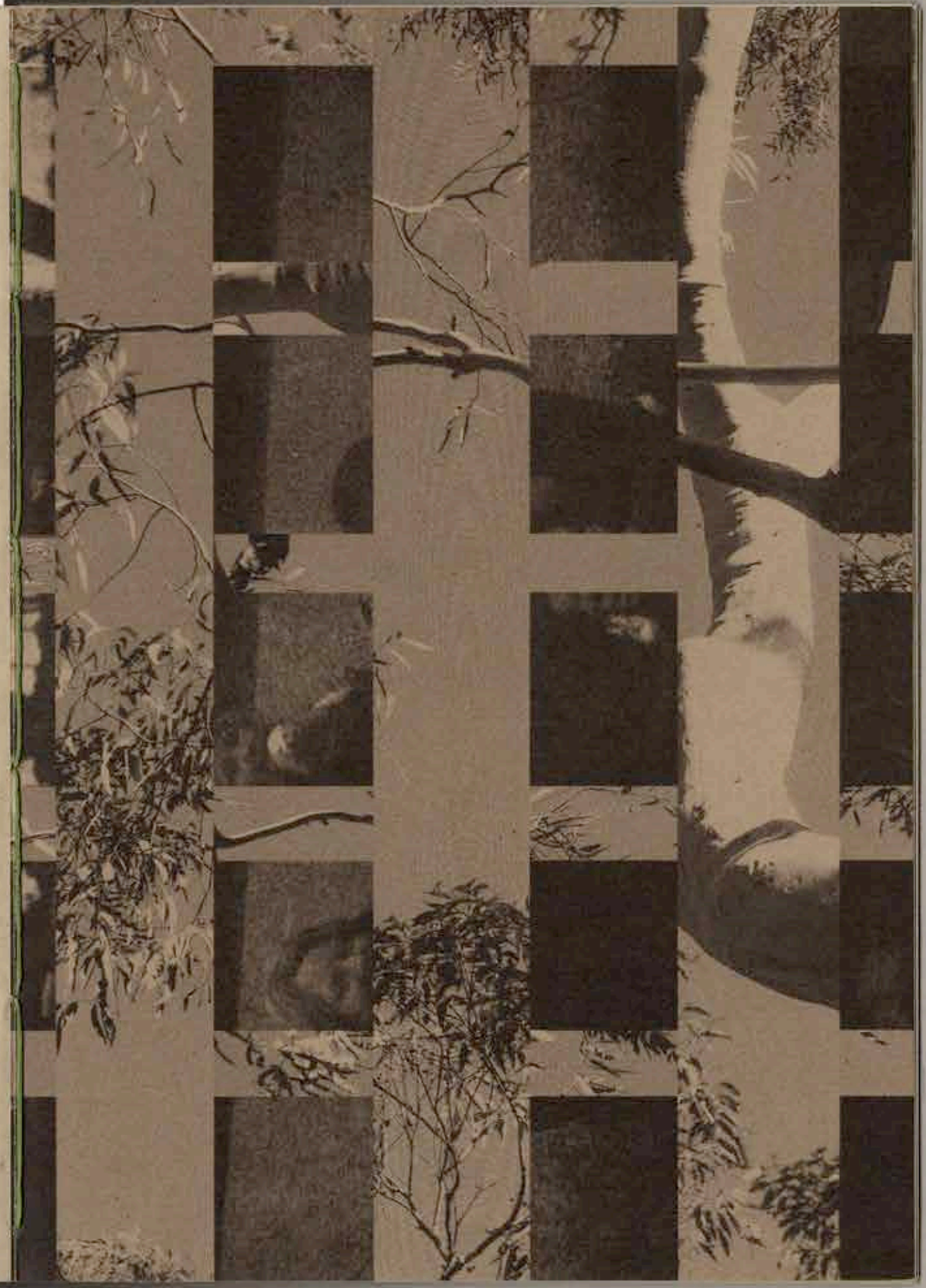
BY THIS GENERATION, two-thirds of the residents of the Communities of Compost around the world were symbionts engaged in intense work and play for sustaining vulnerable beings across the hardest centuries of planetary crisis and widespread human and other-than-human suffering.A significant number of syms had decided to leave their compostist communities, surrendering residency rights for citizenship in other political formations. Some humans, both in-migrants and nonsym offspring born in the new towns, became solid compostists without ever wanting to engage personally in symbiogenetic kin making. Allied with diverse non-sym peoples, compostist practices of living and dying flourished everywhere, and the people in the emerging epoch of partial healing felt deeply entangled with the ongoing tentacular Chthulucene.

There had been great losses of kinds of living beings, as rapid climate change and interlocked ecosystem collapses swept the earth; and the mass extinction event of the Capitalocene and Anthropocene was not over. Still, by the time Camille 3 was fifty years old, it was clear that human numbers, while still too heavy in most places for the damaged natural, social, and technical systems of earth to sustain, were declining within a deliberate pattern of heightened environmental justice. That pattern emphasized a preference for the poor among humans, a preference for biodiverse naturalsocial ecosystems, and a preference for the most vulnerable among other critters and their habitats.

Much of the most inventive work over the 150 years since the first compostist communities appeared was developing the linkages of this pattern. That work required both powerful recognition and strengthening of inherited Chthulucene practices that had not been fully obliterated in the Capitalocene and Anthropocene, and also newly invented ways of linking the three critical preferences to each other.

The wealthiest and highest-consuming human populations reduced new births the most, with the support of the Communities of Compost; but

Born in 2170; human numbers are 8.5 billion. Died in 2270; human numbers are 6 billion.



human births everywhere were deliberately below replacement rates, so as to slowly and effectively reach levels that made sense for distributed and diverse humanity as humus, rather than as end points of nature and culture. Practices of making kin, not babies, had taken hold inside and outside the Communities of Compost. Against all expectations in the early twenty-first century, after only 150 years sympoieses, both symbiogenetic and symanimagenic, seemed to be making a difference in holding open time and space for many of earth's most vulnerable, including the monarch migrations and their diverse human people and peoples. Forests in the transvolcanic belt of Mexico were resurgent, and water had been restored to the pillaged aquifers.

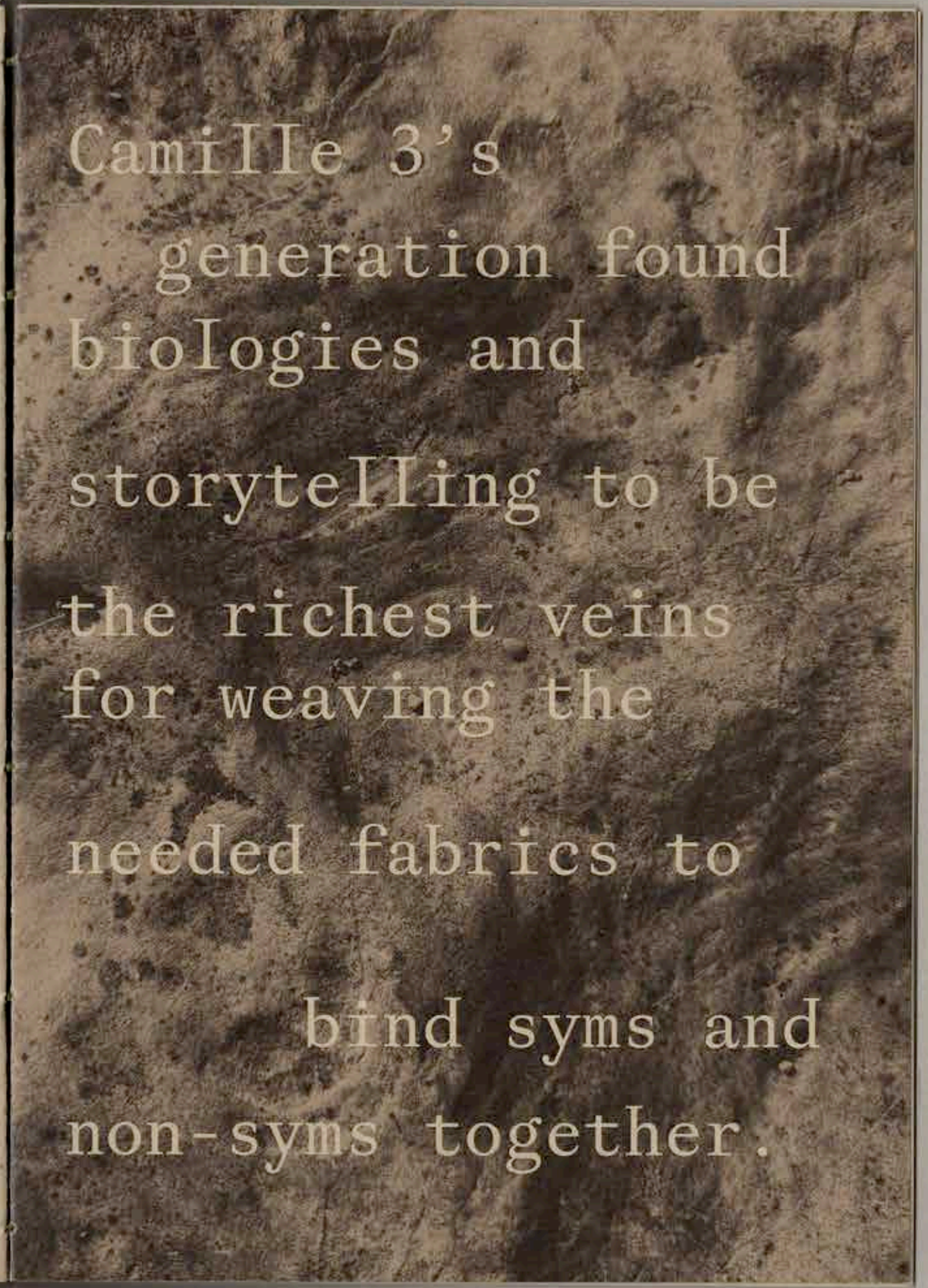
People had worked out robust peace with the critters and scientists of the Biosphere Reserve, as greater control was relocated to campesino and indigenous organizations for environmental justice. Migrations north of Mexico now could count on larval and adult food as nonmonocropping organic agriculture, ubiquitous gardens, and species-rich roadside verges filled the landscape. Devastation of habitats for people and other critters caused by Big Energy and Big Capital was not finished, but the tide had definitively turned. Humus-friendly technological innovation, creative rituals and celebrations, profound economic restructuring, reconfiguration of political control, demilitarization, and sustained work for connecting corridors and for ecological, cultural, and political restoration had all made an impact and were growing in force.

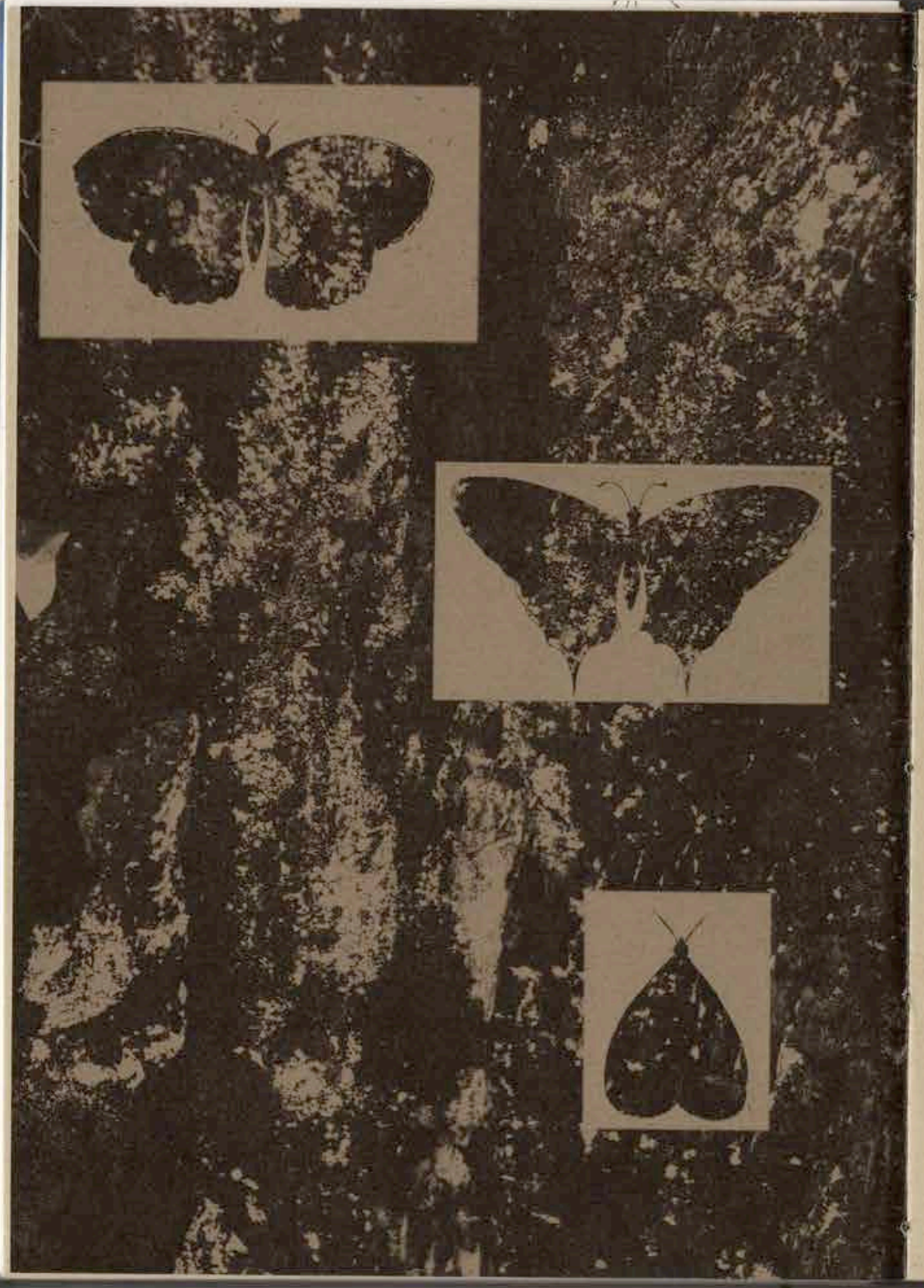
While Camille 3 could not forget the monarchs, per's attention was turned to the fact that syms needed to take stock of themselves collectively in unprecedented ways. The major events of Camille 3's life were travels to gatherings around the world of sym and non-sym humans in the face of general recognition that both humanity and animality had been fundamentally transformed by compostist practices. Of course, many people had never divided

living beings into human and animal; nonetheless, they had all ordered things differently from what was plainly happening everywhere by 2200. It was also inescapably clear by 2200 that the changes were not the same everywhere. Sym worlding was not one thing, and it was diverging and adapting exuberantly in EcoEvoDevoHistoTechnoEthnoPsycho fashion. The recognition was turbulent, exhilarating, and dangerous. The crises of bullying among the children in Camille 1's generation were nothing to the terrors of transition in the third generation of the Communities of Compost, who would in a few more generations become the majority of people on earth. Inventing earthwide cosmopolitics between and among syms and non-syms was the daunting task of Camille 3's generation. Peoples from every fold of earth had long been both generated and nourished by stories, myths, performances, powers, and embodiments of entities not divided into categories recognizable to most conventional Western philosophy and politics. Such stories and embodiments were also deeply embedded in the practices and accounts of both recent and long-established peoples living throughout what was once called the West.

Camille 3 was especially drawn to Philip Pullman's twentieth-century stories about the young girl Lyra Belacqua and her daemon, Pantalaimon. 42 The animal daemons of human beings were capable of multiple transformations until the time of human adolescence, when the animal stabilized into a single morph.

The bonds between human and daemon were very close to the symbiogenetic linkages forged for the young in compostist communities. Severing such bonds threatened persons at the deepest core of their being. Living-with was the only possible way to live-well. Heartened by these stories between and during endless meetings among quibbling and not infrequently fearful syms and non-syms, the critters of earth were forging planetwide ontological revolutions for making kin.





Katherine Pogson

‘Towards... Something More Liveable’ — *A Moth Journey*

Design and Nature: A Partnership, 2019.

IT BEGINS WITH A PLACE. A chalk-hillside, June. While my partner photographs rare native orchids, I start to observe the insects more closely. It begins with a book. Thousands of colour photographs of living moths (Manley, 2008). Startling, disregarded, numerous – yet in steep decline. Gateway to another world, I still have not tired of this book. It begins in the studio. A project responding to vessels in The Pitt Rivers Museum archive begins to 'go all moth'. The textiles connection is obvious, reflected in the common names: Cloaked Carpet, Netted Pug. The structures begin to seep into my practice – yet I know it is not really about form. Colleagues and museum staff alike, react with bemusement, "Don't they just eat your clothes?" I wonder what I am attempting to work out through this process.And so, it begins. I begin to take moths personally. I stand up for, and with, moths.9pm Hornsey Rise:Up the ladder to the roof.The metal frame stretches up from my first-floor terrace onto a flat roof. I climb over the ledge, past the satellite dish, pulling my bag of cables, wooden slats and plastic jars behind me.The North London evening sky is overcast, with the orange glow of sodium lights and intermittent glimpses of moon.In the act of stepping out onto this platform, I enter a different world. I can see into kitchens and living spaces, crowded together, remnants of a garden, the back yard of the pizza shop.

Immediately I feel the wind, the elevation of the hill and sense the cardinal points – sunset and sunrise – in a way that I am woefully unable to do at ground level.Unreeling the electric cable, I cast it off, lowering it through a skylight to a plug in the bedroom below.A simple plywood box, with two angled sheets of Perspex over the top. The cable attaches to a fluorescent actinic bulb, which gives off an ultra violet glow and should not be looked at directly in case of retinal damage. Feeling slightly ludicrous in my night-time sunglasses, I wait for the first wave of insects, the dusk flyers And here they come. Their eyes shine copper in the torch light. You feel rather than see their approach, in a whirring set of wing beats, a percussive sensation on the ears.

Fragility is not the impression you receive, surrounded by dense, cir-cling bodies, as the evening deepens. It is more a sense of urgency, of force of intent – as the moths home in, repeatedly diving towards the light. 6.15am Hornsey Rise:The struts of the ladder are sweaty with dew. The sun is already high enough to warm one side of the box.And now the urgency is on my side. A cascade of diverse creatures, mostly inert, cling to the sides of the structure. A pale green geometer, wing-tips touched with crimson, escapes before I can photograph it. A huge Hawkmoth, the shape of a stealth-bomber, allows me to lift her on a piece of paper. She rolls back her grey wings to reveal bright blue eye markings on a flash of pink.Panicking slightly as the heat rises, I feel a growing sense of responsibility. The roof is devoid of vegetation, exposed, and the vulnerability of these creatures in daylight is clear. Birds gather, knowingly. An apparently expired moth lies on its back at the bottom of the box.

I want to record, shelter and free them as quickly as possible. This short intervention of a few hours begins to feel like a trespass.6.50am Woodberry Wetlands:At the nature reserve nearby, I have started a moth recording group. We monitor population levels and distribution, as many species plummet in number. A familiar story. Light pollution, pesticide use and climate change all play their part in a complex picture, but simple loss of habitat is key.Cycling there through Finsbury Park in the early morning, I see my local patch from a different point of view. Noticing tents among the shrubbery, night workers asleep on the benches, I gain an impression of my neighbourhood, occupied in waves of time by different shifts of humans. The reserve is a reed-fringed reservoir surrounded by high-rise flats. Rounding the corner, the sound of birdsong is instant. The sun blazes through the tops of the reeds. The moth population here is quite different from my home a

mile and a half away, and I begin to learn more about the intimate, evolved relationship between geology, water, specific food-plants and particular species. The seasons pulse with native and migrant birds, in-sects and humans, synchronised to the rhythms of vegetation and weather 8.30am Blackstock Road:Down Fast Fashion Alley on the way to work, Arabic sequined gowns swing and Romanian lorries unload. In search of breakfast, I pass a series of food outlets: Lebanese, Uighur, Turkish, Ethiopian, Japanese. Within the almost instant access to global resources of an urban setting, food seems to be the most essential reminder of home. Musing on my locale in terms of sustenance and supplies, I develop the thought that these synthetic imported textiles might be my most 'local' materials. It occurs to me that the moths — those highly specialised, invisible creatures often thought of as a devouring plague — are simply being starved out of existence. What if they are famished? 9.45am Studio:Conversations among ourselves have always had other participants.(Ghosh, 2016)The objects I make are refusing to be accessories any more. They no longer want to talk to or about the human body so directly.

I produce a series of very wrong things as this dialogue plays out. Relinquishing habitual outcomes, materials and processes, I experi-ment with textiles in different modes and scales. My new subject matter begins to unfold thematically in terms of nourishment, procreation, shelter — appropriating the Maslow2 pyramid basic hierarchy of needs for nonhuman ends.As my focus shifts, I look for collaborators and other outlets — writing, installation, workshops — ways of communicating through an expanded practice, the journey in itself. Decentring the human has liberated me from the artefact, too in a way. Conclusion wayfinding, then, more closely resembles storytelling than map-using (Ingold, 2000)The narrative of my

'moth journey' leads from seeing nature as a resource, through attraction and curiosity, to direct observation, sensory enhancement and learning. This fosters a growing sense of empathy and ecological responsibility, which in turn prompts renewed cultural engage-ment and material action. But what does it mean to 'stand up for, and with, moths' as a mode of creative practice? If the problem of the Anthropocene is one of how to be, rather than how to act (Maggs & Robinson, 2016) examining the purpose of design in an age of ecological destruction requires a profound rethinking of what it means to be human itself. One role for design might be to develop practices which question human boundary constructs. Survival, or "ongoingness" (Haraway, 2016), entails fostering a sense of 'self' which includes intimate 'kinship' with nonhuman nature. Inhabiting this more porous sense of being alive, we may begin to experi-ence our actions as a form of 'self-harm'. Practices such as these may help to dissolve the cognitive rift which seems to paralyse privileged nations from feeling sufficiently the negative effects of human actions, which we so efficiently document (Conrad et al., 2006).This journey embodies two paths: one which leads away from making, and one that returns to it.The first path requires "disciplined thinking combined with strategically, profoundly, madly letting go"(Meadows, 1999). Intriguingly, this implies liberation rather than denial — the forward momentum of moving on from practices which societies have outgrown.Part of this will entail relinquishing materials and habits which are limiting and harmful. More ecological ways of relating trigger changes in consumption behaviour, political and cultural expression, which are design outputs in themselves, with or without artefacts.

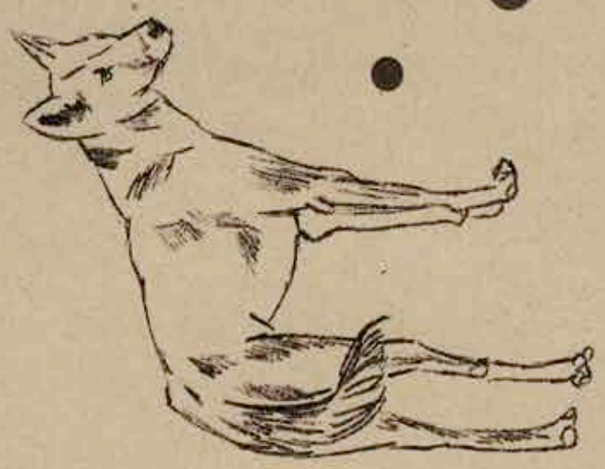
For design, this suggests an uncoupling of the link between established economies of desire and new ideas about value, to redirect the creative urge outward and away from production, towards community engagement, resilience-building and knowledge-sharing. The second path requires a deeper engagement with materiality.

Design solutions reliant on industrial processes create 'simplified ecologies' — a symptom of "life-world disengagement" (Tsing, 2016). Accepting the contradictory, uneven 'muddle' of the present, paradoxical-ly releases blockage. For complexity and entanglement suggest richness, biodiversity — hope. Practice implies habit. My exercises in sensitivity, or "attunement" (Morton, 2018) begin, simply, with what is close by. Engagement with my local 'place', its inhabitants and processes, has given me an entry point into a joyous world of layered themes, images, activities and connections.Aware of the anthropomorphising potential in imagining 'the moth's point of view' I nevertheless find value in this starting point.I appropriate the textiles vocabulary of repair, care and human domes-ticity, to speak about a creature usually associated with damage, nuisance and contamination. This inversion allows me to explore overlooked stories of neglect, destruction and unintended consequences. Through this approach I attempt to untangle and redirect what is materialised through the act of making in order to ask the question 'what truly nourishes you?'

Bailey Murphy

Mothering Through Species

Created through combining storytelling and design as a way to communicate mothering in a multispecies context.



They never belonged to us, they belonged to the dunes, to the heat the glint of meat wrappers at the edge of campsites. Still they watched. Still they circled. Still I imagined they'd claim me if I wandered too far from the tracks

Mothering through intrusion, through the reminder that care is not always soft. They scratched above my ceiling. They claimed the beams as their own. Uninvited kin, noisy & insistent.

A non-verbal inheritance. A signal from stone and water and slow-growing skin. The lichen
mothered memory of all those before it.

They arrived every Spring without invitation, marching through spilt sugar and crumbs trails, they mothered the corners I had failed to clean. I learnt to let them be.

Mothering can be spoken.
It can be translated through
words, images, gestures,
and design.

It can mean listening to rivers,
soils, and stones, and letting
their stories shape our own.

It can reframe language
as shelter, as kinship,
as resistance to silence.

It can be awkward.
It can be unfinished.
It can open space for more-
than-human voices to be heard.

To mother in language is to
practice care through telling.

That practice is real work.

It matters.