



Photo credit: The ("Artificial") Intelligence

Abstract

Under the Anthropocene logics of Enlightened Man, those of us diagnosed by Western biomedical experts as clinically insane—deemed mad and monstrous—are too often pushed to the margins of rationalocentric society: banished from the commonwealth. Turning away from the injustices of the Holocene and towards the creative possibilities of the Chthulucene—the age of monsters—we reclaim our monstrous madness as a radical form of multispecies relationality and establish more caring and empathetic support networks for all lifeforms. This auto-ethnographic account of a bipolar manic episode serves as an entry point for crip chthonic storytelling for multispecies thriving. Drawing from environmental disability studies, feminist technoscience, and decolonial approaches to environ/mental health, I ask: How can the reconfiguration of care beyond the disease model of mental illness contribute to an understanding of environ/mental health and wellbeing beyond the human? Inspired by mood and habit tracking and gardening diaries, I share the following journal entries as a field (garden) experiment in radical relationality that seeks to cultivate a sustainable commoning praxis for (crip) life in the Chthulucene. Through this art-science intervention, I posit an understanding of bipolarity that is situated: a bio-psycho-socio-ecological phenomenon that grounds, transforms, and transcends the human.

Keywords: environmental disability studies, multispecies studies, decolonial STS, art-science

Walking around with the energy of the hot summers
Spreading the weird and illuminated degrees
The evil incarnates, they wanna take it from us
But I walk with a force; they can't penetrate my beliefs
Hey! Weapons of mass distraction
Influence your patterns
The energy
Of a thousand suns
The energy in
everyone
The energy baby (whoo!), the energy baby
The energy baby, the energy baby (Hey!)

— *No-one Ever Really Dies (N.E.R.D.)*¹

Introduction

Under the Holocene logics of Enlightened Man, those of us diagnosed by western biomedical experts as mentally ill or clinically insane—deemed mad and monstrous—are too often pushed to the margins of rationalocentric society: banished from the commonwealth. So we—the mad and monstrous—gather around our various diagnoses and attempt to form a new commons. In the act of gathering, we find peer-led support and challenge the disabling

¹ Hello, reader! Welcome to my footnotes. Here you will find most of the theoretical analysis that is tied to my empirical work. While this analysis is usually presented as a discussion section in the main body of the text, I have chosen this alternative format so as to maintain the lyrical flow of the art-science piece that makes up the body of this present chapter. It is similar in structure to the two parallel texts running through Annemarie Mol's *The Body Multiple* (which I like to think of as *The Text Multiple*). And speaking of references, those live here in the footnotes, too. Take for example the song lyrics that open this art-science piece: N.E.R.D. "ESP," track 6 on the album *NO_ONE EVER REALLY DIES*. And also why not go ahead and note here that this paper is based on an art-science intervention I devised in 2023. Fingers crossed, a version of this paper will appear as a chapter in the anthology *Environmental Disability Studies: Embodiment After the Anthropocene*, edited by Jennifer Lai and Rebecca Monteleone, currently under contract with Palgrave. If it hits the press by the end of 2026 I will be impressed!

structures that banish us. We share our stories of rupture and repair. We resist contemporary capitalist notions of “sanity” because, really—how sane is ecocide?

Turning away from the injustices of the Holocene and toward the creative possibilities of the Chthulucene—the age of monsters—we reclaim our monstrous madness as a radical form of multispecies relationality and establish more caring and empathetic support networks for all lifeforms. In this auto-ethnographic account, a community action-based researcher uses their embodied, collective experience living with a bipolar diagnosis as the entry point for crip-chthonic storytelling for multispecies thriving. By interpreting my healthcare experience through the lens of eco-crip theory, I ask: how can the reconfiguration of care beyond the disease model of mental illness contribute to environ/mental health and wellbeing beyond the human?

Environmental philosopher Donna Haraway has proposed the “Chthulucene,” a speculative alternative to the increasingly unlivable Anthropocene. It is an epoch of “ongoing, sympoietic, and tentacular practices” that resist the Anthropocene’s anthropocentrism by foregrounding making-with across multispecies worlds (2016, 55). “Sympoiesis,” she writes, “is a word for worlding-with, in company” (58); we require each other in “unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles” (4). The Chthulucene is not a temporal stage but a speculative figure that calls for “staying with the trouble” through what she calls SF methods—science fiction, speculative fabulation, string figures, speculative feminism—that cultivate response-ability² and more-than-human kinship (2, 12, 31).

It is time to collectively build out the more-than-human world of the Chthulucene through a praxis of radical relationality: one that dwells in precarity, catastrophe, and ruins

without despairing. Such world building requires the rejoining of art with technoscience. Within the transdisciplinary field of art-science, this praxis is especially generative, as it emphasizes the necessity of art-based research approaches in practitioners' exploration of art, science, technology, and society. As delineated in the introduction of the *Routledge Handbook of Art, Science, and Technology Studies* (Rogers et al. 2021), "Art STS is predicated on the capacity to see both art and science as constructions of human knowledge-making" (1).²

I argue that in the Chthulucene, we cannot afford to stop at human knowledge-making. We need to enact modes of creative sympoiesis from across all disciplines that not only bring bodyminds, technologies, and environments into inter-action as seemingly separate entities, but also into intra-action: an attunement to the wholeness of experience that can be experienced when the enculturated boundaries between self and other are (at least temporarily) erased or blurred. It is in the liminal spacetime that the Chthulucene provides where all who enter can explore environ/mental health as intra-relational vitality.

In my own art-science praxis, I have explored how art-based inquiry activates the Chthulucene as an experimental place in spacetime where knowledge-making is inseparable from care, response-ability, and collective survival (Lorenz 2024). Whether it is using movement to process the ecological traumas of irradiated landscapes (Lorenz 2023), community-making for environmental justice (Abbott, Cheatle, and Lorenz 2025), or bringing together diverse voices to

² "Response-ability," first articulated by Haraway and later rigorously theorized by her colleague Karen Barad, names the cultivated capacity to respond within entangled, more-than-human relations as they are being made, rather than a moral duty assigned after the fact. The dash encourages readers to shift their understanding of ethics from individual responsibility and blame to attentive, situated participation in the world's ongoing becoming, foregrounding care, responsiveness, and relational accountability.

devise a play about how a neighborhood will work through the climate crisis (in collaboration with Warner and Jimenez in Hakemulder et al. 2023³)—these art-science interventions of the Cthulucene contribute to art-STS scholarship not only a name for an epoch but a way to cultivate practices of multispecies flourishing out of the ruins of the Anthropocene.

Art-Science as Environ/mental Health Intervention

Enter the art-science piece you encounter in these pages: “Green Ribbon, Green Thumb.”

The western biomedical model of mental illness as documented in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), classifies certain fluctuations in human mood as deviant, even when they are attributed to such “natural” environmental factors as a change in the Earth’s seasons (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Bipolar mood episodes can be triggered by (among many other things) the fluctuating rhythms of the sun, moon, and stars. Neoliberal human subjects, modeled after even-tempered and rational automatons, are, after all, ill-advised to sync their circadian rhythms to those of their celestial kin. Rather than treating these sensitivities as purely pathological, this mad, monstrous researcher presently attempts to understand their own bipolarity as an invitation to explore seasonality with unprecedented intimacy.

Inspired by mood and habit tracking—a therapeutic journaling tool that bipolar individuals and their care providers employ to better understand, manage, and prevent “disordered” mood episodes—and gardening diaries—in which gardeners track the hopes, dreams, and performance of their plots through the seasons—I designed a field (garden) experiment in which I would combine two therapeutic modalities—gardening and journaling—to navigate an oncoming manic episode,

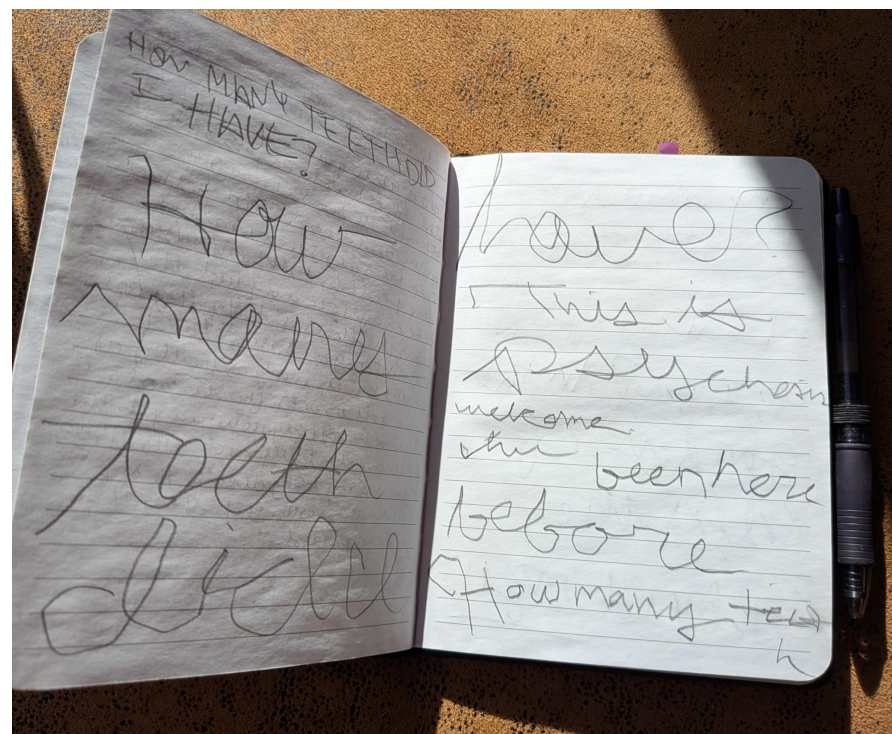
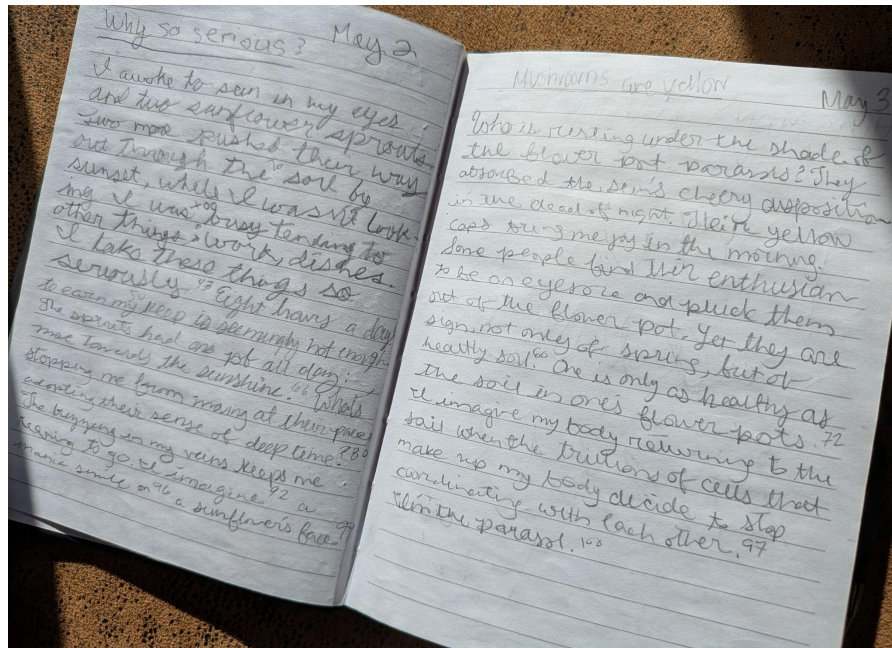
³ I worked together with the city of Ithaca, New York’s community theater Civic Ensemble, Cornell University’s Department of Performing and Media Arts, playwright Thomas Dunn, and members of the larger Ithaca community to help devise the play that became *The Next Storm*. Set in the year 2030, it follows the aftermath of a storm that leaves parts of Ithaca underwater, forcing the city to come together and face the consequences of an increasingly unstable climate. I also designed the participant surveys which helped the research team evaluate the efficacy of using theater as a tool for grappling with climate change issues.

using it as an opportunity to explore bipolarity as a form of radical relationality. Expanded moods have the tendency to open one up to evermore inter- and intra-connections with one's ecosocial environment. My goal in this embodied, action-based research experiment and art-science intervention is therefore to take advantage of this expanded state of being to cultivate a sustainable commoning praxis for (crip) life in the Chthulucene.

Building on decolonizing interpretations of mental states that honor rather than pathologize deep connections to seasonality (see for example Gibson 2022, Mills 2014, and Wynter 2003), I argue that bipolar mood episodes can serve as transpersonal energetic states that explode quotidian relations between self/other and body/environment, thereby allowing for radical re-imaginings of collective experience and response-ability during times of planetary crisis.

This auto-ethnographic account of a bipolar mood episode took place in May 2023. It happened to coincide with Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States, symbolized by a green ribbon. Earlier that year I had planned to experiment with my green thumb (or, as we shall see, perhaps my lack thereof) by planting a garden as an alternative form of therapy to the medications I had recently been prescribed to treat Bipolar Type 1 Disorder. Then I remembered the green ribbon and decided to tweak the experiment: every day for the month of May, in addition to gardening, I would write approximately one hundred words reflecting on how gardening was serving as a form of plant medicine that treated collective environ/mental health conditions. The onset of a manic episode during the experiment was unplanned. The result is the mad art-science piece you are about to read. I use these entries as a way to converse with literatures in environmental disability studies, feminist technoscience, decolonial STS, and art-STS (ASTS). In so doing, I posit an understanding of bipolarity that is situated: a bio-psycho-socio-ecological phenomenon that grounds, transforms, and transcends the human. Thus, I offer these

stories as an attempt to shed light on opportunities for the (re)creation of more-than-human subjecthood, the development of more caring forms of eco-social relating, and the building of environ/mentally just futures for all Earthlings.



Figures 1 and 2: Handwritten journal entries for Green Ribbon, Green Thumb

Green Ribbon, Green Thumb: a hundred(ish) words a day for the month of May

May 1

How does one become a Master Gardener?⁴ Do the daisies decide? Who has the discerning eye? The black-eyed Susans or the buckeyes? I have a sheet of reincarnated tree hanging on my wall from my university proclaiming I have Mastered the Arts. What arts? The peppers I planted indoors too early this winter have succumbed to spider mites. Their leaves sucked dry of their life force, one by one. These mites have Mastered the Art of sneaky survival. And weaving. I wipe off their delicate webs from the discolored leaves, hoping that will save my crop-to-be. But who is to say what is mine?

2

Why so serious?

I awake to sun in my eyes and two sunflower sprouts in my pot. Two more pushed their way out through the soil by sunset while I wasn't looking. I was too busy tending to other things. Work, the dishes. I take these things so seriously. Eight hours a day to earn my keep is seemingly not enough time for me to get my job done. The sprouts had one job all day: move towards the sunshine. What's stopping me from moving at their pace, adopting their sense of deep time? The buzzing in my veins keeps me rearing to go. I imagine a manic smile on a sunflower's face.

⁴ Master Gardener programs are voluntary community-based educational initiatives designed to train individuals to serve as expert resource persons in horticulture and environmental practices within their communities. Operating in most states, these programs are typically affiliated with land-grant universities and their cooperative extension services, which are institutions historically funded by federal and state government dollars to promote agricultural and environmental education and outreach. Going through the formal channels of becoming a Master Gardener requires me to "stay with the trouble": it means embracing the discomfort and complexity of my layered histories—Black, Indigenous, and settler colonial—and bearing witness to the ongoing violences and displacements tied to land and identity. My motivation for becoming a Master Gardener in my city was to help cultivate a deep, respectful kinship with Turtle Island, acknowledging both the harm done and the possibilities of healing through honest engagement and relational care with the land.

[A conversation in verse between indigenous poets T— and L—]⁵

Dear L—,

A collective shift in consciousness

Is needed

so The sunflowers will all

turn

Towards the sun

(p. 160)



3

Who is resting under the shade of the flowerpot parasols? They absorbed the sun’s cheery disposition in the dead of night. Their yellow mushroom caps bring me joy in the morning. Some people find their fungal enthusiasm to be an eyesore, and so pluck them out of their flowerpots. Yet they are a sign, not only of spring, but of healthy soil: one is only as healthy as the soil in one’s flowerpots. I imagine my body returning to the soil when the trillions of cells that make up “my body” decide to stop coordinating with each other. I am the parasol.

Figure 3: Flowerpot parasols growing underneath the shade of potted croton plants

⁵ The brackets in this art-science piece function much like stage directions in a script. Bracketed matter “sets the scene,” describing inter- and intra-actions among various mind-body-environment inter- intra-faces. In this case, the scene takes place somewhere in the narrative ether, between Inuk artist Tanya Tagaq and me. I was reading her genre-defying novel *Split Tooth* while composing my journal entries, and found myself conversing with her throughout the experiment. I created dialogue with Tagaq by excerpting poems from her novel.

4

[During a ketamine-assisted psychotherapy session under the mulberry tree in the backyard:]⁶ How many teeth did I have? How many *teeth did I have?* THIS is PsYchOOOsI!!!!!! [manicsmilewhysoserious?] Welcome. I've been here before...How many teeth but HOW MANY teeth do I have? How many TE-E-E-E-E-TH do [m]we have? In the Garden of Eden, the cat bird mews. My muse. My music...Mmmmmm...Wait...Did I just kill myself? DID I JUST KILL MYSELF? Then go—OH! I'm in a chrysalis!!! No human babies for me apparently.⁷ I breathe with the blue jay. Everyone is here. [I mimic the birdsong all around me:] Tuning fork.

MY GOD. How many teeth have I had? [sapling I see in the grass:] Who gets to be a tree? Me? MWe.⁸

⁶ Ketamine-assisted psychotherapy (KAP) is a therapeutic modality that can be done at home rather than at a clinic, hospital, or therapist's office. The idea is that ketamine, a dissociative anesthetic that produces psychedelic-like effects, opens a window of neuroplasticity, altered consciousness, dissociation or loosened perceptual boundaries, which the therapy then uses as fertile terrain for change. When done from home, a clinician prescribes the ketamine and the patient uses it in their home environment, often with tele-health check-in, guided preparation, integration therapy, and sometimes a "sitter" (another person) present. I had been practicing KAP for almost six months at the time of this entry as a way to process allegedly "non-ordinary" bodymind states like mania, depression, and psychosis.

⁷ This insight on human procreation and my role in it was in part based on a recent debate I had with environmental feminists about the international BirthStrike movement. Like other initiatives that center eco-reproductive politics (such as Conceivable Futures, No Future, No Children, and Population Matters), BirthStrikers consist of women and gender-diverse people who have pledged not to have children as a political and ethical protest against the escalating climate crisis. There is much to unpack in this debate, as these movements emerged largely from white, western, middle-class forms of environmentalism that frame the climate crisis as a state of planetary collapse beyond repair. In contrast, many Indigenous and Afro-diasporic traditions emphasize being in an ongoing reciprocal relationship with the Earth—not as a resource to save, but as a relative to care for. From these worldviews, passing along our lifeways by having biological children—despite centuries' long efforts to eradicate us from the planet—become acts of resistance and continuity.

⁸ MWe (Me + We) is a term introduced by Daniel J. Siegel to describe an integrated sense of identity that unites the individual self ("Me") with our collective, ecological, and relational existence ("We"). Based on thousands of years of perennial wisdom traditions found all around the world, it invites a shift from viewing ourselves as separate beings to recognizing our intra-connectedness: the wholeness of self, community, and nature as one living field of body-mind-environment.

Dear T—,

I am dead
but no one will
believe me so
I guess this
is hell

5

Who gets to be a tree?

It's a mulberry tree. W—'s so-called "Tree of Life." He had meant to cut it down when it was just a sapling. Looked like a weed in his yard. An eyesore in an otherwise uniform expanse of lawn. But the task kept slipping down his to-do list. Long shifts at the hospital. His kid's basketball tournaments. It grew close enough to the fence that he never reached it with his lawn mower. Five, ten years; its stems turned woody; its branches matured into flowers and bore fruit. Birds, squirrels, even raccoons have feasted. His kid is grown and has moved out. His wife left and took the dog. The Tree of Life remains.

6

A mother with her partner and child in tow paid for my groceries today when I forgot my wallet. She said she was meant to pay for them today. Carrots, tomatoes, spinach. I offered to pay her back but instead she had me pay it forward. W— said I was doing just that by attending that play about bipolar disorder. Proceeds go to NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness).⁹ I had just finished sharing a coffee and conversation with a longtime NAMI volunteer who lives with treatment-resistant depression. I mentioned I thought depression was a symptom of living in an incompatible ecosocial environment. She said it's simply a biochemical imbalance; a lack of serotonin.

⁹ "Let Me Tell You What It's Really Like" is a one-act play written and performed by sisters Jennifer and Kate Ives presenting their first-person accounts on living with bipolar disorder. Founded in 1979, NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) is the largest grassroots mental health organization in the United States. NAMI works to support individuals and families affected by mental health conditions through free education, advocacy, and peer-led programs.

7

W— and I paid a visit to the Master Gardeners today. Two older white women under a tent at a spring plant sale coordinated by the university’s cooperative extension program. I asked them two questions: what’s wrong with my pepper plants, and how can I become a Master Gardener? I learned that becoming a Master is quite rigorous. There’s hundreds of training and apprenticeship hours to be put in. You meet the program’s codified standards, you become a Master. Just like how I became a Master Scholar of science and technology studies, according to my university’s diploma-awarding criteria. As for the peppers, I was told to “hard them off” by slowly exposing them to the outdoors. Listen to the “masters.”¹⁰

*

[My response to the Master Gardener application question, “Why do you want to be a Master Gardener?”:]

I am training to be a professional science communicator and am passionate about creating healthy communities of plants and animals (humans included). Becoming a Master Gardener would allow me to combine both passions while supporting my community. I have wanted to become a Master Gardener (without knowing such a program existed) since I was seven years old and tried (and failed) to grow tomato plants for a science fair project. I have been trying to plant a garden ever since. I am now 33 years old. All this time I have struggled to find the time and space to care for a garden. I know most of the current Master Gardeners are retirees. However, the COVID-19 pandemic taught me not to assume that I'd make it to retirement age. Better to follow my dreams now. It's finally time to make that little girl's dreams come true, before it is too late.

*

¹⁰ In *Hospicing Modernity*, Vanessa Machado de Oliveira (2021) critiques mastery-based approaches as products of modernity’s obsession with control, certainty, and technical competence. These mindsets perpetuate separation, domination, and denial of relational complexity. She argues instead for depth-oriented education that fosters humility, emotional maturity, and the capacity to sit with uncertainty and interdependence.

8

A green ribbon symbolizes mental health awareness. Like red for AIDS and pink for breast cancer, these small loops clasped to lapels tell people, "This is a worthy cause to get behind." I don't have one yet. I'll add it to my grocery list. When I think of the color green and May, I think of gardening season. It only *just* occurred to me to put the two together—green thumb, green ribbon. (After all these years of bouncing from apartment to apartment...finally living in W—'s house, complete with yard...with warmth and light and quiet days to myself...I finally have the time to put two and two together, I guess...) Gardening is good therapy because it reminds us that there is way more to life than our skull-troubles.

9

Today I was both a rogue and anxious gardener. Rogue because I planted my sunflower sprouts without permission on someone else's private property. Anxious because I've been worrying about them all day. In my haste to get them planted in E—'s coveted raised garden beds, I forgot to bring water for my transplanted babies. And it's been so sunny today...I already lost one sprout to dehydration, I realized with dismay this afternoon, yet I had watered them this morning...The pepper plants look peaked as well (to say nothing of the two blighted ones, rest in peace) so I've just brought them back inside.

*

[An email exchange:]

L—: Hi there! Any advice for reviving a pepper plant blighted by spider mites? (See image attached.)

Extension Master Gardener Help Desk: Good morning, L—! As for your pepper plant, it is best to destroy that plant, clean the area where you will replant, add fresh soil, and put in a fresh, healthy plant. If you get spider mites again, just spray a steady stream of water to kill them.

*

10

I'm sitting in the parking lot of the psychiatric center. In-patient services. Volunteering for NAMI tonight. I was at another psych center this morning. NAMI-run group therapy for people to share their stories about their mental illnesses. To share battle scars. Commiserate. Prove that we are stronger than their diseases.¹¹ The peer group leader told us, "Identity with yourself as a whole person." We're different but not broken; yet we are constantly told to do battle with our disorders. The stories I heard during group mentioned nothing about birdsong or picking dandelions off the side of the road. Nothing about how we humans are something *bigger* than our flesh sacks. Who of us in group would keep our conditions if given a choice? What if we related to our conditions as a divergent and subversive way of sensing and responding to the naturecultural world around us?¹² What model can we adopt? Not the biomedical disease/recovery model, but the...what? Eco-crip?¹³

Dear L—,

We would do anything for acceptance

Water Food Air Love

Approval

What drives a social climate?

¹¹ I use the terms "mental illness" and "disease" non-innocently here, implicating the full weight of their neuronormative and eugenic histories while also recognizing that many of my mental health peers still use these terms to describe their experiences. Another case of "staying with the trouble."

¹² For more on naturecultures, see Puig del Ballacasa in *Matters of Care* (2017) pp. 160-164.

¹³ The eco-crip movement reframes disability as an ecological condition and environmentalism as a disability justice issue, advocating for worlds where access, care, and interdependence are recognized as essential to planetary survival. As explored in *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco-Crip Theory* eco-crip challenges Western ideals of purity, autonomy, normalcy, and productivity, exposing how ableist and anthropocentric hierarchies structure environmental and social thought alike. Essays in the collection examine how disability, illness, and environmental degradation intersect through lived experience, representation, and policy — revealing that vulnerability, interdependence, and adaptation are not deficiencies but ecological realities and sources of resilience. See also this volume; Ortiz (2023); Petra Koppers (2022); Alison Kafer (2019); and Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch (2019).

We do what the others do

Following

They say there is safety in numbers

Depends who is counting

(p.160)

11

All the seeds I picked up from the seed exchange cart (run by Master Gardeners) at the public library have sprouted: watermelon, parsley, tomato, yarrow. I see new visitors at the Tree of Life in the yard: blackpoll warblers, cedar waxwings, catbirds, Swanson's thrush. American robins bring in the dawn earlier and earlier, and there is a flurry of outdoor activity well before 6:00 AM. I can hardly sleep in that much later myself. I wake up with veins tingling, again. The day is here!!! So much to do and experience!!!! The NAMI peer specialist told the in-patients at the psych center last night that she has to watch out for elevated moods during this time of year. Seems we are synched up with the seasons, is all.

12

I've got mixed feelings about how I've been faring as a plant mom today. The croton I repotted a month ago that seemed to be doing so well alongside its other three siblings seems to have suddenly lost most of its waxy leaves. Did it get too much sun? Did something shock its system? The sun certainly burned the remaining pepper plants. I forgot—did I even intend to???—take them into the shade for the hottest part of the day...I should have listened to the Master Gardener and been better about hardening them off. Sunburn eventually causes cancer, they say...

L—,

A collective shift of consciousness

Is

needed Before the

sunflowers burn

(p. 161)

13

X— just called. They have not been doing well. They aren't motivated to eat. 98 pounds now...The depression is deep again. Told me they fainted, hit their head, and are now being cared for at their neighbor's place. Meanwhile, earlier today, W— and I wondered how many different chickens went into the dozens of chicken nuggets we'd just consumed from five different fast-food chains for the Grand Nugget Challenge...T—'s therapist says it's the grief. Maybe time for new medication. X— says they weren't meant to live alone. They need daily human companionship. At least R— provided them with that when he was alive. They could take his verbal and physical abuse, could even sleep in the bed beside him, because he was a warm human body. X—'s family tells them to get a dog, but X—says they can't even take care of themselves, so it would be unfair to the dog. Their trauma runs deep.

L—,

They say it's wrong They say it's right

Objective observation Critical thinking

While we Eat our puke

Off of a residential school Dining room

floor

Off of the floor of a porn set

Facial punishment all around

(p. 160)

14

Today is Mother's Day. I called my *abuela* M—, who turns 91 this year. She is proud to report that she only takes two pills a day: one for high blood pressure and one for low thyroid. I called my *abuela* J—. She's 86 and waiting for cataract surgery and rotisserie chicken for dinner. I called *mami*, who decided to pick up an extra work shift as a medical escort for seasick/homesick cruise employees rather than celebrate with a Mother's Day mimosa. I called back X—, who has a psychiatrist's appointment next week to discuss weaning themselves off of benzodiazepines.¹⁴ The only person who wished *me* a happy Mother's Day was the supermarket cashier. She was just trying to be polite. Doesn't know I'm a (bad) plant mom.

May 15th

Beware the Ides of...May?

I confess: I believe in synchronicity. This morning I read from a book I had been meaning to pick up for a while: *My Body is a Book of Rules*. The author, who is a member of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, bipolar, and a former Catholic (we have so much in common!), writes about wanting to have been renamed during confirmation: Elissa Dymphna Marie Washuta. Despite the Catholic school nuns wanting her to relate to Kateri Tekakwitha, the Lily of the Mohawks (22), Elissa was instead drawn to Dymphna, the patron saint of the mentally ill. Somewhere in 7th century Ireland, King Damon, "driven mad by grief and mental illness" after his wife's death, tried to seduce their teenage daughter Dymphna. When she refused, he cut off her head. Dymphna died on the 15th of May...That's today.

¹⁴ Benzodiazepines are a type of sedative medication. They were commonly prescribed for PTSD treatment in the 1980s and 90s, but were phased out as the standard of care starting in the 2000s and formally discouraged by the Department of Veterans Affairs in 2010 due to lack of efficacy and high risk of dependency. See the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense report (2010) and Bernardy and Friedman (2015).

Washuta writes, “at fourteen, I didn’t yet know that my brain had started going bad...Dymphna just seemed like the right saint for me (p. 146).”

*Make those children
work For their
misery
(p. 161)*

16

I’m seated by the seed library again. There’s a production of *Every Brilliant Thing* in the library’s auditorium.¹⁵ Show starts in ten minutes. NAMI is tabling. So are three other organizations dedicated to suicide prevention. Earlier today a NAMI volunteer told his In Our Own Voice story about his cycles of depression, suicidality, and hospitalizations. Suicidal since age ten. 40 to 50 different drug prescriptions. Still suicidal. Treatment resistant. Shock therapy (aka Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation) seems to be helping. He has also found he has a gift for rehabilitating dying plants. Just before their death rattle, he coaxes them into living. I bet sometimes *they* coax *him* into living.

17

Feeling like a god in the Garden of Eden.¹⁶ An Eastern bluebird on a power line. (I look up after writing *this* line and ki is gone).¹⁷ The house just got power washed. No more yellow-green loblolly pine pollen powdering the porch. The bluebird is back—Nope, gone

¹⁵ *Every Brilliant Thing* is a one-person play written by Duncan Macmillan with Jonny Donahoe, first performed in 2013. It tells the story of a person who, after their mother’s suicide attempt, begins compiling a list of all the things worth living for, in the hopes of convincing their mother to persist.

¹⁶ According to the DSM-5, during mania, “inflated self-esteem is typically present, ranging from uncritical self-confidence to marked grandiosity, and may reach delusional proportions....Grandiose delusions [e.g. feeling like a god] are common” (p. 128). They hit the nail on the head with that description!

¹⁷ Ki/kin/kins pronouns. Originating from Robin Wall Kimmerer’s Anishinaabe-inspired “grammar of animacy,” (2013, 2022) and further elaborated by Kara Huntermoon (2024), these pronouns address nature’s need for a language signifier beyond the objectified “it.” Ki/kin/kins offer the English language pronouns that reflect kinship with all living beings. Eco-crip communities are extending this relational framework into a gender-inclusive pronoun system honoring interdependence and more-than-human belonging.

again. Ki has flown out of frame. Water drips from the windowpane. I read about a “bipolar’s broken brain” today while waiting at the DMV. New license. I got to select my sex as “nonbinary” on the form and lied about not having to take any medication for a chronic condition. (Also forgot to mention I need “corrective lenses” to drive. Oops.) My license will come in the mail in a couple of weeks. Wonder if you can see my green ribbon in the photo.

18

Anxious Plant Mom

W— and I are going out of town for more than a few days. No human has been tasked with tending to our fledgling garden. It’s supposed to rain this weekend, and the sunflower and watermelons can handle the midday scorch of our deck. It’s the peppers I fret about. Who will keep the spider mites at bay without my loving daily brushing? Who is hardy enough to survive our neglect? Is it ridiculous to hire a plant sitter? A Master Gardener told me recently that most house plants die from overwatering rather than under. I wonder if that’s true.

19

There’s a farm out here in the country that offers goat therapy. Miniature horse therapy, too. I want to drop in while we’re passing through, but it’s by appointment only. I just called, but no one answered...I left a message. Can’t have a goat therapy session today, I guess. There are other friends around me, though: Canada geese—lots of goslings! A pair of barn swallows who have made a nest nestled between the awnings of a nearby coffee shop. A red cardinal I could see; an indigo bunting I couldn’t. And the wildflowers! I’m finally learning the names of my kin.

20

My circadian rhythm is sizzling. Last night I woke up at 1:00 AM ready to tackle a new day full of endless possibilities. Lifeforms team as the days grow longer. Humans of the frigid city can’t wait for summer. Outdoor street festivals encourage loud singing in even louder costumes. Those with paler skin than mine develop their baseline crisp, hoping the tender pink mellows into a golden brown. Mosquitoes poised, ready to bite perennially exposed flesh. Why is it crazy for my bones to soak in this summer sizzle and rejoice like the

hydrangeas? Have fun, but keep my cool, they say. Euthymia is the goal, they say. Avoid euphoria to prevent melancholia. Keep an even keel, they say. Winter will return, I say.

L—,

The simple truth is we are simply an expression of the energy of the sun. We are the glorious manifestation of the power of the universe. We are the fingertips of the force that drives the stars, so do your job and FEEL.

(p. 12)

21

[On a visit to Washington, DC, for a conference on communicating science policy to the US federal government:] Honeybee investigates clover blossom. American robins give chase through the cherry trees. Sunday noon sun beckons humans onto Capitol Hill lawns. How many American Congress members can identify an American robin? I myself went through four years of formal education focusing on environmental studies and yet was still unable to name these funny little sentinels that looked out over the campus lawns. All these college students, studying so hard about subjects of great import. Economics. Politics. Psychology. How to cure cancer and conduct cyberwarfare. Who gets to study lawn ecology? Robin history? Honeybee poetics?

Leisure is resistance.

22

Examples of environ/mental health initiatives around the nation's capital:

- A mental health awareness project at the public library includes a colorful cardboard box containing colorful sheets of construction paper with loving affirmations scrolled across them. It's a "take one, leave one" system. I choose one. It reads, "You are rad!" I leave one. It reads, "I am you, and you are me, and we are *mwe*, and *mwe* is this tree!"

- A fast fashion clothing chain partners with Active Minds¹⁸ for mental health awareness month. Purchases are rounded up to the nearest dollar to support initiatives that give youth the tools and resources to talk about and advocate for mental health in their communities.
- Glover Park core power community yoga fundraiser to end suicide among LGBTQ+ youth. All donations voluntary and in support of the Trevor Project.¹⁹
- A Black Lives Matter DC²⁰ poster affixed to a lamp post announces to passersby that “mutual aid is solidarity, not charity.” Their website quotes Big Door Brigade: “Mutual aid is when people get together to meet each other’s basic survival needs with a shared understanding that the systems we live under are not going to meet our needs and we can do it together RIGHT NOW!”²¹

23

Dinner with W—’s family. Grandma and Grandpa. She has a green thumb for flowers and herbs, he for trees and cacti. In their younger years, their house was filled to the brim with plants. Two acres-worth of gardens and an arboretum are still out back. The stroke forced formerly spitfire Grandpa to slow down; now landscapers come to do the work he no longer has the energy to do; Grandma can’t do it all herself. She’d rather admire the tiny flowers that the “weeds” sprout in the lawn than have to mow it, anyway. (“I love all flowers!” she proclaims.) Ruby-throated hummingbirds arrive at the garden feeder for the first time this season today. Just in time for our visit, they joyfully exclaim. We’re spending the night in their backyard, in a tent. Camping out in the country.

A collective shift in consciousness

Because sunflowers don’t turn to the moon

¹⁸ <https://www.activeminds.org/>

¹⁹ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

²⁰ <https://www.dcblm.org/mutual-aid>

²¹ <https://bigdoorbrigade.com/what-is-mutual-aid/>

Salting soil

Reaping sweat

(p. 160)

24

Fell asleep to the sound of the neighbors' horses neighing gently. The crescent moon and Venus were framed by our tent window. Not quite the season for evening crickets, but two cardinals and brown thrashers greeted a 5:00 AM dawn. Hummingbird hums for a nectar-filled breakfast just behind our heads, separated only by a film of camping-ready plastic. I slept through the entire night for the first time in a couple of weeks. Did I sync my circadian rhythm with my many diurnal friends out here? No matter; my back is still buzzing. Longer days means more time for the muses to frolic through our bones. Revel and REJOICE!!!!

25

Reasons for seasons

It's chillier than expected when we return home. Grandma and Grandpa gifted us a tomato plant and a shark tooth cactus. All the plants save for the mysteriously wilting croton survived being left "home alone." Permaculture sounds well suited for the busy traveler. That's why farmers became sedentary, after all. They married the land and the plants. Too bad they equated commitment with ownership, domination, and hierarchy. Patriarchy, white supremacy. The enlightenment. Scientism. (I miss being a nomadic gatherer...Such nostalgia...) Good or bad, there was a reason for their season. What comes after their season ends? The eternal return thus continues.

26

Hypomanic dreaming

Up before 4:00 AM again. Don't wake W—. Roll over. Read *Braiding Sweetgrass* on my phone: the cosmology of my home, Turtle Island.²² Reading helps me fall back asleep for

²² The Turtle Island creation story is shared by many Indigenous peoples across North America. In it, a woman falls from the Sky World, is gently carried by animals onto the back of a great turtle, and with their

an hour or so. I dream. In a long line for an EDM (electronic dance music) rave party in a barn. By the time I get in, it's no longer a rave; it's a NAMI Peer-to-Peer support meeting. I'm disappointed. Then sirens. Bombs start falling from the sky like dying birds. One lands inside the barn. But it doesn't go off. Instead, it leaks radiation. I read 3.33 on my yellow Terra-P Geiger counter.²³ Everyone evacuates. Not me. Then everything goes black. I think I see W— in the darkness. But no—it's a ginger cat. Kins radium green eyes stare back silently. I exit. I pull myself thickly out of the dream. A siren wails outside our bedroom. W— is rubbing my legs. I feel so heavy in the blood and the limbs. Hard to stay awake. But I must remember this dream.

27

We're hosting a dinner party for some friends tonight. That means doing some spring cleaning before summer comes. Turns out that when those folks came to power wash the loblolly pollen off the house earlier, they accidentally injured our hydrangea bush. Our next-door neighbor's flowering tomatoes took a hit, too. She had to pull them out while we were away. We gave penance by giving her the tomato seedling Grandma had gifted us. W—'s son came to "make the weeds symmetrical" with a power mower. I plucked the dandelion flowers just before the slaughter. Good for salad. A small rabbit watched the scene curiously from a nearby crawl space. A tick clung to kins ear.

help builds the North American continent: Turtle Island. The cosmology of Turtle Island teaches that the world was created through cooperation and care, that all beings are kin in a living web, and that humans have a duty of reciprocity and respect toward the Earth, who is kinself a living, conscious being inseparable from all other Earthlings.

²³ The ghost of my doctoral research on nuclear disasters in Japan leaves traces in my psyche: Beginning summer 2020, I had planned on doing a year of ethnographic field work for a (rather straight-laced) comparative anthropological study of post-disaster peace culture in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Fukushima. The Ukrainian-made Terra-P Geiger counter, first released following the Chernobyl nuclear accident, became a common household item after the Great Eastern Japan earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant accident in 2011. I had purchased one in preparation for my doctoral fieldwork. The COVID-19 pandemic had other plans for Earth that year. That is when my scholarly methods of inquiry pivoted from anthropology to art-science, and my dissertation *M.A.D. Monsters for the Chthulucene: Radical Relationality and Care During Planetary Crisis* (2024) was born. In *M.A.D. Monsters*, I employ various somatic practices to explore how the reframing of monstrosity, madness, and relational difference can function as an ethical and political practice of care beyond the Anthropocene.



Figures 4 and 5: Author posing with sunflowers grown in pots at home (left) versus sunflowers author guerilla gardened at E—’s raised garden beds

28

Rainy day. Lazy day. I took two naps. Must have needed them. It started last night during the dinner party. I fantasized about serving dishes made with vegetables from our luscious garden, like E—’s, where I guerrilla gardened some of my sunflower seedlings. W— advised against serving the dandelions. (This crowd isn’t that radical.) Instead we “harvested” our vegetables from the supermarket’s bounty. At some point during the party the conversation steered towards health. White Medical Doctor Friend informed Black Medical Doctor Friend that the latter’s genetic predisposition to hypertension was due to the transatlantic slave trade: the higher the blood pressure, the lesser the chances of dying from dehydration while chained to the bottom of a ship, or in the blazing heat of a plantation summer. Survival of the fittest. Hearing this, mixed-race Black, White, and Native Soon-To-Be Doctor of Philosophy Friend just tried to blink politely.

Dear L—,

There was plenty of famine in the past, in our history. Famine can live in your bones

and

be passed on to future generations just like your hair color. There are many ways to

be

empty.

(p.97)

29

The cicadas started singing today. Probably praising the rain finally stopping. The radio announced that today, Memorial Day, is the start of hot dog season, which lasts until Labor Day. I wonder if veggie dog sales will be at an all-time high this year. Plant-based diets seem to quell Northerners' climate anxiety, at least until the last meatless-yet-still-somehow-rubbery bite of hotdog goes down. In other news, my new driver's license came in the mail! My sex is listed as "X," nonbinary. It was as simple as marking it on the application form (at least in this state). I recall how the form also asked me if I relied on psychiatric medication. My pill bottles remain full. I keep them together in a glittery cosmetics bag, where they keep each other company and party 24/7 without me. Sometimes I shake them like maracas, but that's all.

Dear T—,

"my" mind-body-land-sea-air-spirit

is angry

it is rebelling against

the bonds of

individuated

alienated

neoliberal subjecthood

being a single separate rational

“human” being

the darling ideal of psychiatry

so no: I *won't* be medication compliant

I *want* to feel all of Gaia's seasons

in my bones

because I AM GAIA, GODDAMMIT

Let me be the ocean already.

30

There is a chance that Little Rabbit ate two of the sunflowers we planted yesterday. W— cried out “NOOOO!” as he stepped outside this morning to head to work. Ki must have been hungry. I later confirmed the damage on my way to the post office. Off to mail a homemade rainbow scarf to A—, who knits in public as an act of community building. A— asks me for money sometimes, because kin's disability prevents kin from working in the expected ways, but kins disability claim keeps getting rejected, so ki is strapped for cash and sometimes I send kin some. A— throws kins self into the fiber arts while ki waits for the government to give a shit about kin. Community knitting is what ki has to offer the world. I offer my questionably-stitched scarf to A— so ki may elevate it to the level of Art-as-a-Form-of-Radical-Resistance-and-Relationality.

The sea seems eternal. She offers comfort in the form of Vast Solidarity. Our

Original Home...Can the water be cognizant of my own fleshy currents through

the ten feet of ocean ice? Can my blood join the ocean currents in ritual? Moon

approves.

(pp. 54-55)

May 31st

Last day of what I've come to regard as Green Ribbon/Green Thumb Month. I experimented with various therapeutic modalities—I even tended to a virtual garden in a video game and a psychedelic-assisted therapy session under the Tree of Life. (Never did get to share my troubles with the goats...) We've planted things. Nurtured things. Or tried to, anyway. Many have failed to thrive, and some have perished—but I'm starting to suspect that No One Ever Really Dies. My therapist told me during our last session that when she was training to get her LMFT (Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist) license, she was taught that a patient's environment consisted (mostly) of social factors. The patient's (again, mostly social) environment helps shape the patient's in/ability to cope with the challenges of life. Landing in the psych ward, then, would indicate that the patient was maladapted to their environment. An online bipolar community forum, meanwhile, asks us bipolar folks if we feel like the moon's phases affect our moods. I don't know where the moon is at the moment, but the next time it's full, I'll pay attention. Maybe I'll howl.

Discussion: Art-Science Approaches for Radical Relationality

Feminist technoscience has long sought to reimagine method not as mastery but as participation. From Donna Haraway's (2016) sympoietic call to "make kin;" to Karen Barad's (2007) quantum understanding of intra-action and response-ability as a way to break old mindbody habits of individuation and alienation; and through Indigenous feminist ethics of relational accountability (TallBear 2019; Simpson 2017; Kimmerer 2013; Liboiron 2021), art-science methods become a way of being-with the world rather than extracting from it.

In this sense, art-science is not an aesthetic accessory to scientific inquiry but a necessary relational instrument. Artistic, performative, and somatic practices cultivate the sensitivity required to sense what rationalist epistemologies cannot hold: the affective, ghostly, and more-than-human agencies moving through places like Fukushima or the manic body. As Gómez-Barris (2017) observes of extractive zones, only embodied and aesthetic modes can register the slow violence of technoscientific ruin and the fragile possibilities of re-emergence. My somatic-based work in irradiated landscapes (2024) makes palpable Barad's notion of intra-being: every gesture—human, atomic, or oceanic—is a reconfiguration of the same world-matter.

Remembering the radical relationality that connects all Earthlings indigenizes technoscience by re-rooting knowledge in place, reciprocity, and care. David-Chávez's (2024) "relational science" and Whyte's (2018) "ethics of care" remind us that inquiry must be covenantal: to study a landscape, or a mood, is to enter into response-ability with it. Art-science thus serves as a form of covenantal listening—moving with the land's trauma rather than diagnosing it, tending to the ongoing processes of planetary repair through co-creation, movement, and story.

The intra-active methodologies developed in art-science interventions like *Green Ribbon*, *Green Thumb* make visible the entanglements of matter and meaning, psyche and planet. Such methods allow the researcher to become a conduit through which Earth itself might speak: through gesture, pigment, soil, or pulse. In this expanded paradigm, care

replaces control, participation supplants prediction, and creativity itself becomes a form of response-ability.

Where feminist technoscience once illuminated the entanglements of power, knowledge, and matter, its decolonial successors enact those entanglements as repair. We now stand in a time when art, science, and spirit must learn to breathe together—when the researcher, the land, and the atom are three notes of the same exhalation. This is the work of the Chthulucene: to compose with the world rather than dissect it, to cultivate intra-being as a methodology of survival, and to remember that knowing, like healing, is always an act of shared becoming.

Works like *Green Ribbon*, *Green Thumb* and others found in this anthology demonstrate how art-science interventions which embrace ways of crip knowing-thinking-being are not supplementary to the social sciences but rather constitutive of it. Practically, they point toward interventions that cultivate response-ability and environ/mental health across scales. Somatic cartographies of mood and seasonality, garden-labs where ecological care is tracked through diaries and drawings, and performance ethnographies that embody manic intensities all expand the repertoire of qualitative methods found in disability studies, environmental sociology, and the social sciences as a whole. These interventions help make knowledge relational, embodied, and accountable, while modeling collective worlding practices that bridge scholars, communities, and more-than-human kin.

Conclusion

Building upon alternative theories of mood episodes that honor rather than pathologize deep connections to seasonality, this art-science work has proposed an eco-crip approach to care in the Chthulucene. Through artistic auto-ethnographic analysis, I have argued that bipolar episodes can serve as transpersonal energetic states that destabilize rigid boundaries between self and other, body and environment—offering openings for collective re-imaginings of response-ability during planetary crisis. Drawing from everyday intra-actions with human and more-than-human kin, I situated bipolarity as a bio-psycho-socio-ecological phenomenon: one that grounds, transforms, and transcends the human by attuning to the relational field that sustains all life.

Through this inquiry, environ/mental health emerges not as the equilibrium of discrete subjects but as the *generative vitality of relations*—the ongoing capacity of ecosystems, communities, and bodies to sustain difference, reciprocity, and collective becoming. Care therefore becomes a material, ethical, and affective practice of *intra-being*: a way of knowing-with the world rather than knowing-about it. Health, in this sense, is the creative negotiation of care across entangled scales of life, where art and science are not separate domains but co-choreographers of planetary healing. Art-science, as practiced here in *Green Ribbon, Green Thumb* thus became a method of *covenantal listening*—a way of sensing with the world's wounds while cultivating possibilities for regeneration.

Art-science has always been here—lurking at the margins of rational inquiry, composting categories, and reanimating relations. To legitimize it now is to recognize that art

and science were never separate to begin with: both are gestures of world-making, ways of loving the Earth back into being. The future of art-science lies in creating hybrid scholarly forms—articles that interweave zines, performances, or scores; courses that teach students to experiment with art-science as method; collaborative labs that model STS as an act of planetary co-creation. The task ahead is to build infrastructures that hold these gestures with care—to practice environ/mental health as the vitality of relations and to move STS beyond analysis toward collective worlding. By embracing art-science as central to its epistemic project, STS deepens its commitment to care, relationality, and creative responsibility. These commitments are key if we Earthlings are earnest about (re)indigenizing ourselves to our home planet.

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