

Dear Liz,

I have the sun in my eyes, I am letting it make me see red and when I open them again it's snowing, when it's whizzing around us it makes me feel inside my body that I am also whizzing around, diffracted and reflective. I had this week, where I just stepped right off the track. Suddenly. I saw this other track. It was serendipitous that we should talk this week when I had already stepped off the path, into the forest. An artist I share my studio with is leading a forest bathing for her family this weekend. I wonder if she will also step off the path, or maybe she's already off and on her path. In terms of sharing, there's much to share but I'll start with that 'nature' is a word I distrust and dislike, it's overused, unimaginative and means nothing. Perhaps you'll join me in banishing it for this exercise? Or not. That's fine too. Landscape is a close second for me. Land-scape, landing on scapes, nature and landscapes are the fodder of the men who painted what they dominated, or hurried to the invisible North Pole to be first, or tried to come first, anywhere, anytime. I am not so interested in men who want to get there first. I mentioned my interest in water, it's kind of like a bodily, mindly obsession, it's hardly unique but I approach it in the way that you might approach a hill that needs climbing, or a waterfall that needs to be dipped in, I never consider I am the only one, or that I am only one, I am multicolorous, ambidextrous, forgetful, and waterlogged. The waters are always cycling and I am simply part of that. A contaminated leaky vessel (thank you Ursula and Astrida for these terms).

Perhaps I'll leave this here. The globe is moving and the sun over Sweden is almost higher than my window.

With watery wishes,
Bronwyn

Feb 11, 2021

Dear Bronwyn,

"I want to meet her between the words, beneath language." This quote has been in my mind for the last few days, and I can't seem to locate who, where, how, it came to me. I always have the desire to meet between words... without language.

I spent the last few days challenging myself to use discourse without pronouns.

No we.

No our.

No they.

No their. No them. No I.

No your. No he. No She. No it.

No us.

Slipping through letters and words.

My favourite book in the entire world is Samuel Delany's autobiography, " The Motion of Light in Water." I have read it at least three times, and once aloud to an old lover of mine. This book has not only taught me to re-think how stories are told, or how queer memories are held, but every time I read it I think about the places in which I have left my own encounters... and how many of them have been next to or near bodies of water. The first time I realized I was in a cruising area was when I was 12. It was a specific spot near my Grandmother's house. Dolphin Beach. Up on the dunes, with a view of the ocean. In the summer, I would ride my bike there daily. Suck on fire ball candies, and watch men give each other blowjobs and jerk off.

xx Liz

February 15, 2021

Dear Liz,

The spring has arrived! It is a flirty spring, it flings, it throws off the snow so quickly, like dropping a trench coat to the floor, all the waters in rapid transformation. There was some days of swamping, and you know this artist I think you'd really like, Signe Johannesson, she was calling this a new swamp age that we are entering, and I think she's right, it's similar to an ice age, but instead it is much more brackish, mixed sweet and salty water, umami waters perhaps. In this swamping age we are all a bit stuck in the mud, moving between states of toxicity, passing on pieces, the swamp is an archive, it filters us, and inside the swamp we are all just collections of beings, we are all holobionts.

I was thinking about your letter and the non-gendered flesh encounters. I think the holobiont, a mutating needy creature full of other creatures, lives in a way where we are each other and we need each other or as Lynn Margulis describes it:

'Life today is an autopoietic, photosynthetic phenomenon, planetary in scale. A chemical transmutation of sunlight, it exuberantly tries to spread, to outgrow itself.'

I thought about this image from Lynn in relation to you spying the cruising spot with a lollipop (or did I misremember the lollipop?), it made me think about how we are photosynthesising sunlight, or at least some part of our embodied food chain is, and how we are all cruising, the lollipop, the mouth, the other mouths, the trees that form the shade for cruising spots, and I also thought about my own sexual awakening with another being. I had for many years been pleasuring myself and this relationship with my own holobiont body was well formed, a chatty conversation, a lively exchange, but perhaps similar to you, my first experiences of sexualness with others was very much centered on an experience of being outside. It was music festivals, parks at night, shoreline caves, these kind of places. And most colourfully I remember my first love and I sneaking out at night to fuck in the bush that ran along a quiet bay near our homes. This kind of Sydney scrubby bushland with the moon bright and the flat bay water, it was fucking gorgeous. It was like some kind of night world, upside down world, where it was just all about joining bodies. It almost sounds too unbelievable really, or like I have glamourized it in my memory, but I actually don't think I have. It was actually just fucking beautiful. Later on things got complicated and boring and shitty and blah blah but just then, with the water and the bush, and the moon, and the utter delightfulness of being naked together with them all, that was something just stunning.

Back to the genderless flesh, I think it also reminded me of that experience too, there was some kind of namelessness in the erotics I was taking part in, I remember the images I would see in my minds eye and they were these black and white tones that kind of undulated in and out of each other, and there was this thing about scale, with my eyes closed I would sense my own body as constantly in flux, differing scales, temporalities, giant feet, tiny head, all misty proportions.

Lynn goes on to say 'Life transforms to meet the contingencies of its changing environment and in doing so changes that environment. By degrees the environment becomes absorbed into the processes of life, becomes less a static, inanimate backdrop and more and more like a house, nest, or shell—that is, an involved, constructed part of an organic being.'

I am (of course) drawn to her image of the absorption of life. How have I absorbed the quiet bay water into my being, as erotic memory only or does it linger in my mass of beings in some other way? What have you absorbed Liz?

I'll leave this here for now. The call of the everyday rings out!

With watery wishes,
Bronwyn

March 3, 2021

Lynn Margulis, 1991
Symbiosis as a Source of Evolutionary Innovation
Speciation and Morphogenesis
<https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/symbiosis-source-evolutionary-innovation>

Dear Bronwyn,

I am a holobiont: an assemblage, a collage.... " a discrete ecological unit." Well, discreet and not discrete, which is the way I like it.
secrets

I wonder what kind of secrets bodies of water hold. Secrets that are impossible to crack. Impossible to study and analyse. Unknown. As they should be. I certainly have a lot of secrets. Do you ever feel as you are telling the honest truth, as you drop the words, you question if you actually did live the story you are telling?

People think I can't keep a secret. Richard always says it is because I am a running monologue. Like a leaky faucet. That I say what I think constantly. But I choose my verbal filters very carefully.

As a Holobiont I host a lot. I think of myself as in collaboration with my body. My fat is autonomous. My flesh as moving in it's own time. My body is an armature for it's material. I can control it to a certain extent, but I also feel it is largely out of my control. This material is unruly and I am here to simply house and support the narrative. Over the last two years, I have grown a small patch of hair in the spot where I rub in testo gel everyday on the top pole of my stomach, under my tattoo which reads, " Intuition Junkie." This tattoo is written in the handwriting of a woman I met while I was working in the desert. We only spoke a few times. I can't remember her name. But I remember we were talking about how much we loved the desert. The dryness. The soft harsh climate. "I could imagine myself living here, but I would desperately miss the ocean," I said to her. " Me too," she replied.
"But I'm an intuition junkie, and I know I could live without water close by if I could live in this beauty for the rest of my life."

Not me. I need to know that one day I will die next to the ocean... preferably "my ocean." The Atlantic. The ocean my mother lost her wedding ring in while saving me from drowning when I was 4. The ocean I learned to submit to and swim in when I was 7. The ocean that makes up Dolphin Beach, where I experienced cruising for the first time. About a decade ago I went to the point in Morocco where the Mediterranean meets the Atlantic. You can see the clear dividing line. It is amazing. You can swim from one side of deeply calm waters, to the other, of rough and choppy waves. All you do is just cross a line and in seconds you are in completely different bodies of water. It's wild!!!

xo Liz

March 8, 2021

Dear Liz,

It's Sunday evening here and I am thinking about the question you asked me.

What secrets do bodies of water hold?

I am thinking that this question needs to be asked in parallel to another: about queerness and bodies of water, perhaps it's too simple but I am wondering if all bodies of water are queer bodies of water? They do each seem to defy their own stiff categorisation. I am wondering if we can sense the queerness of water bodies, and even before that I wonder if the queerness of bodies of water is relevant, or exciting, or meaningful in some way and to whom. I am also wondering if the term bodies of water is gendered somehow. And I am wondering how queerness might enjoy or not enjoy being in relation to bodies of water as an idea, and I am thinking I can't really use the term 'bodies of water' without acknowledging Astrida Neimanis, and her wonderful book, but also somehow with the greatest respect to her work, also returning to some other readings of the term bodies of water, so that the bodies of water we are considering are perhaps less academized, and perhaps more felt, I feel like Astrida would be ok with that. I would really like to know the answer to the question what is a queer body of water, but I have the feeling today won't be the day I know for sure. Today I am peering so close but also with a Sunday evening kind of resolute slowness that the bodies of water that I inhabit in my holibiont form, are a little tangled today. They are a little tired. They are a little twisted. Some of the bodies of water I live with have been melting today. Some are bloated, some are itchy, some are caffeinated.

Secrets. Funny you should bring secrets into this. I have been diving around with some conversations recently that deal in these matters. The secrets of bodies of water seem to be endless, but also clean cut, opaque and translucent.

I am actually terrible at secrets and should not really be trusted with them if it's truly something someone does not want shared on in some way, not that I would share in a hurtful way but I think they do tend to bubble out of me, soak into something I am working on, relate to another situation in some way, rub off on each other, I am pretty porous and pretty leaky and pretty obviously full of holes, I am a pretty hopeless case for an isolated individual, and I am one of the many, I am just recalibrating in a sea of other thinkers and I am a being full of bits that don't stay shut tight, and I am pretty good at leaving bits of myself around, I am definitely pretty fucking shabby when it comes to staying whole, and I am squeezed into toothpaste, into sausage, but the sides are always cracking. I am pretty hopeless at most of this but do seem to find myself a jelly, set in a mould, sometimes, a bumble bee who has slowly awoken after

winter, also a storm cloud passing, sometimes I am a burst of wild raspberry. As a holobiant (so hard to spell) I am totally fucking tied up in the yogic concentric circle making of being and yet I am also kind of like water scum, flotsam and jetsam (also Ursula's yellow eyed eels) I fiddle about on the surface, I am swept in circular sometimes satisfying patterns, laying on top of a mattress, that holds me upwards, when I float I am pushed up by the waters, as flotsam I eye off jetsam, kind of like a cloud upside down (or as Joni says, a cloud from up and down) I think I am the water scum, pretty fucking floaty.

On the other hand, I like that you can keep a secret. It makes me think of you as a deep crevice full of well-ordered archival secrets. And that makes me sad you can't come to Stockholm. It makes me sad I can't come to Berlin.

If you want to, tell me more about your body and the way you are thinking of your fat as autonomous and your flesh as moving in its own time. I remember when I saw the documentation of the work you performed around your body as a site for some kind of climate energy making (although the work was much more than this, this is just one aspect that stood out for me) but in this work I remember you on the floor with the ropes, maybe there was smoke in the performance space, and your was body controlling these long cords, and the cords controlling your limbs, some kind of dancing synergy between limbs. The ropes seem like bodies of water here, watery in connection to sailing, watery in the way they string together, water in the way they act as extensions of your limbs. These fingers or tentacles reaching out, vibrating I guess. Motioning. What does flesh do in you?

I would love to visit all the places where the seas meet other seas and oceans meet other oceans and swim along the fault lines, like running a finger along a wound, swimming the divide.

I would also love to divine some kind of word expertise, in the art of secrets.

I wonder if I can swim my way into that.

B.

X

March 14, 2021

Dear Bronwyn,

I'm not sure why I have been struggling so much to respond to your last letter. It somehow evoked so much in me. I needed to wade around for a while. Float. In general, I tend to find a balance between deep doing and deep floating I think.

When I go to the beach, I either rip all my cloths off and jump into the ocean within the first moments upon arrival, or I wait for hours, until I slowly slip into the ocean, submerging my body, bit by bit. The only consistency between these two modes of entry is that, when I am in... I am in, which means, I am in the water for a good hour or more.

I almost drowned in the Atlantic ocean when I was 4. My mother lost her wedding ring saving me.

I learned to swim in the same ocean when I was 5, and I feel like I never really got out.

You wrote that you are "obviously full of holes." I can't seem to escape holes... or rather escape how glaringly attracted to holes I am. Apparently the human body has over five million "holes," 7 of which are visible.

A lover of mine once asked me to fuck her with my flesh.

"What does flesh do in you?" you asked in your last letter.

My flesh such a noisy material these days. It's a material I have to take care of constantly. Feed. Withhold. Find a balance of care for. It wants more. I have to deny it sugar. I can only feed it food at certain times. These days, it seems to lobe to turn into muscle and slowly loose fat. Most of the time, I feel like it deeply desires:

A grilled cheese sandwich.

Heavier daily doses of testosterone.

Deep moisture.

Rest.

Physical challenges.

To fuck.
To fast.
Moisturizer.
To be held.
To move like water.

I recently wrote this text for an anthology. I think it speaks to your question:

What is a hole? An opening through something. An area where something is missing. A discrepancy. A defensive portal formation. A crystal defect. A particle that is uncharged amongst other charged particles. An unusually deep place. A prison. A shallow cylindrical hollowed out space. A unit of scoring. An awkward position or circumstance. A pleasure conductor. Holes are not actually particles, but rather quasiparticles, even anti-particles. When electrons move into holes under the influence of an applied voltage, they create new holes. Hole Conductions.

Holes are edging. You can just make out the edge of all the holes. There are no free spaces. Just bodies existing, sitting, lying, squatting, leaning, moving, squeezing, contorting, dangerously close together, writhing, lining, replenishing, filling in all the cracks. Fuzzy heads. Concave profiles. Contoured shoulders. The hang of stomachs. There are no spare gaps. No free space. Everyone is so close, that our feet don't even touch the ground. No vacant pockets, just flesh. Tender abundance. Sticky silk. Meaty material of ambiguous substances.

In the midst of so many holes, why does so much productivity begin in the form of a duet? I identify as a boulder. This flesh is unknown material. It is not one. It is not a them. It's consciousness expands, as it's organ floods. It's been a slow burn. A sandy-rough slow burn. A burn that lingers slowly, painfully slow.

An eclipse takes place when one heavenly body moves into the shadow of another heavenly body. Eclipses projected through a pinholes protect our eyes. Pinholes occur in nature. Forests absorb sunlight, only leaving a few rays to pass through occasional holes. What does this hole look like while it slowly burns? It's slick, fleshy, muscular and silken. Veiny. Translucent and delicate. Scarred with intention. Soaked with hormones. Slight and elegant, saturated with words. What words. Whose words. So many words have slowly burned into this mound. Tired, but also restless. Always in motion. Always moving in involuntary directions.

What holes. Whose holes. Still holes. No Holes.

Where is a writer, a theorist, a philosopher, an artist with no holes? Where is a body without lines and changes and calluses and shifting futures and re written pasts? Where is the cum and sweat and orgasms and salt and breath and flesh and skin and material without holes? And where are the fictions without everything and nothing.

Rough flesh holes.

A house is a hole with a sphincter and every house has a door. The thresholds of this house lead to the streets. Together we are panoptic laborers. We will never leave. We have done enough outside these holes. Inside this hole, your hole, their hole, only exists discursive disruption. An explosion. A rupture. A burst. A fracture. A schism produced from an un-locatable force. We are the threshold. Produced inside, outside and all around these big gaping shimmering holes.

What does your flesh desire these days?

xoLiz

April 5th, 2021

Dear Liz,

Well holes and flesh and bodies of flesh and holes and well, they all seem to have come full circle since we started this. Perhaps with some ironic or cinematic twist the corona virus caught up with me and made its presence known in my flesh, in my muscles and in my mind, inflamed and swollen, I had a sense that I had aged rapidly, my ankle, an old injury flared up, my fingers had this sense of arthritic intolerance, and most of all my lungs were wet, reminding me that the lungs are actually outside and inside our porous bodies, I was soaking in covid responsiveness that my body was flying off. This was all a fleshy matter, mutating my metaphorical longings to exist as in the multiple as a two-legged body of water, when covid did it for me, not in the way I had hoped, but it reverse drowned me, choking on my own wet matter. There was almost a queerness of this reverse response, this flip and kick, and it was the way I had longed for my body to sense itself as wet, entangled, warped, and covid found a way to bring this into my every (difficult) breath. I don't know how comfortable I feel writing about covid in this way when it has killed and killed and killed and it has killed unequally, along lines of racism, along lines of poverty, along lines of healthcare discrimination. But to relate this bodily injunction to our ways of thinking, it was fleshy and visceral and confronting in a way I hadn't expected. I am just crawling off the covid island now, dipping my toes back into the watery zones of ways of relating to the waters, as collaborator, as kompis. You left me with a question in your last letter, what does your flesh desire these days? And I want to answer that is desires sunshine, outsidership, to be in the weather, to be out from the inside, to be held and to be asked to be held, without necessarily needing to hold, but to be asked and to know some answers, and also a toasted cheese sandwich, salty chips, thick green olives, bubbles. My flesh also wants to wax and wane, substitute and reassemble. I am asking the water for help with this.

Yours in watery body containers that leak and overflow,
Bron xx

PS I liked the way you shared writing from another Liz reality, and so I am sharing a little writing moment from another Bronwyn reality, something from a journal on Blue Humanities in Poland, it describes the image of how I see my water research and how the Hydrocene, the curatorial theory of water I am crafting, emerged to me...

To end these watery reflections I will share my internal image for my process of researching art, water and the climate crisis. It's an image of a beach in Sydney. It's sunny and I am standing waist deep in cool green waters with sand under my toes. Gentle waves pass around me. I can see both the shoreline and the horizon. I am half submerged, between land and sky, in the waters. My research is the process of cupping water from the ocean in my hands. I can never pick up the whole

ocean in my hands, and yet I keep trying. The water is desperate to return to the ocean below: it consistently drips, fingers reveal leaks and quickly it becomes relational between bodies of water. And while the waters are struggling to return to the ocean, my hands form a pool, just for a moment. This pool in my hands is the research. The temporary pool becomes a tangible zone for observation, contemplation and water-based ontology. Each pool I form in my hands is made with 'natureculture', not separate to it. Integral to each pool are the artists and the water, who relate to each other in it. As I peer into my hands, I recognise that each pool holds its own rhythm, cadence and memories. As the researcher, I am holding pools in my hands, and my role is to pay deep attention, notice the points of connection and in this manner, define a temporality and location for each pool, as separate and also infinitely connected. In this way, through scooping the waters into my hands, the Hydrocene revealed itself to me. Through the intersecting urgencies of artists' practices and crumbling climates, I have become highly tuned to artistic collaborations with water. Water is my inner hook for understanding these ways of making planetary points of connection in art. I stand between land and sky, in the water, and form a counterbalance, with the rapid climate crises at one end and the radical potential of art making at the other. Led by the artists and the water, the Hydrocene glistens in the pool of my hands.

Dear Bronwyn,

I am so happy to hear that you are recovering and feeling like a version of yourself that feels familiar again. That I know of, I haven't had COVID, but from the dear one's I know who have gone through it, it certainly sounds like a deep and scary unknown hosted by your body. Also, to host a virus that has been turned into a tool for biological global warfare... not that this hasn't happened before, or wasn't already happening through other viruses, through the environment, through bodies of water.

During the last month I was diagnosed with a chronic illness, which I am now told I have to adjust to for the rest of my life. It's not serious now, but could be if I don't make the necessary changes. Take pills twice a day, possibly forever. Schedule when I eat and sleep. Basically, control my life in all the ways I hate, even though, the adjustments have ended up not being so drastically different from life before I had this new knowledge. The strange thing about this condition is that I don't feel any symptoms. None at all. A friend of mine has the same. She told me before she found out, all she could think about was water. She wasn't just thirsty all the time, she also craved to be submerged in water. She desperately felt she needed to be surrounded by water. She was obsessed with the color blue. Everything became about water in her life. And then she was diagnosed. Extreme thirst and needing to pee a lot is supposed to be one of the early signs, but I have not experienced any of this. I still maintain I have the strongest bladder ever. I can go hours without peeing. My Oma, a Holocaust survivor, used to tell me that I could get through a war and never have to pee. She would say this to me as if it is a sign of strength.

I've always been an intensely feeling body. Every body worker I have gone too, every doctor, every dancer, performer, sex work client, lover, bodily collaborator of all kinds have always remarked at how susceptible and sensitive my body is. I usually always know when something is off... even by a tiny bit. But this time was a shock. I couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe I didn't know. I had no signs. And now I ask myself everyday, how can I live with, even host, collaborate, work with, something forever that I don't even feel happening to my body? I know it's possible. But it's still just such a head fuck.

However, regrading water, as I had already remarked in previous letters to you, I deeply miss its presence in my life. I have a good friend who bathes with seaweed twice a week. They say it calms their anxiety. Gives them a sense of home and safety, as they grew up next to the ocean.

I might try this myself.

To end my final letter to you, I want to quote my favourite book in which I wrote about in my first letter.

I honestly can't remember at which moment in his book, " The Motion of Light in Water," Samuel R. Delany writes this quote. I coincidentally found it written in a book of mine a few days ago. It was a book I had taken on my last holiday with me, to Greece, to the ocean, pre-pandemic of course.

He writes:

"I merely want to fix it before it vanishes like water, like light, like the play between them we only suggest, but never master, with the word motion."
Sending you love and light and the motions that bring us back to the bodies of water we love... especially our own bodies.

x Liz
April 28th, 2021