



Until the dust settles

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abstract

Impatience rules the systems in which we operate. Since the inauguration of *ephemera* in 2001, we have witnessed increasing haste which continues until this day. There are endless possibilities for us to work smarter and harder, thereby delivering more in less time and writing to comply with sector and university publishing norms. In this situation, writing in academia becomes normalized to publishing in 'top' tiered journals, especially those that find themselves on some world ranking list. In contrast, we put patience at the heart of the academic profession. Proposing writing with patience, we envision writing without intent to complete a specific project, writing without clear boundaries, beginnings and endings. Such non-event writing holds potential for meeting the world as a verb, and for enduring a collective capacity to care.

Waiting

For years, Emily Dickinson had been sitting alone in her room, watching the world outside through the window. Taking notes, writing beautiful lines. Words about trees and flowers, rain and the wind, death and living. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was an American poet who spent most of her adult life confined to her house and it seems also for long periods staying in her bedroom. All but four of her over 1800 poems were published posthumously when they had been found by her relatives among her belongings. Who was

she writing to? Why did she write? What did this practice of writing mean to her?

Writing poetry seems the most difficult genre of all writing. Using the multiplicity of meanings of words, conveying layer upon layer of meanings. Like an abundant box of treasures, always more to be discovered if you dig a bit deeper. A poem draws you into a miniature world created by a few words and sentences, creating an affective atmosphere where we as readers can dwell and linger. A world in-between.

Is the writing of poetry a practice of patience? Of thinking about words, meanings, rhythms? Saying words out loud to hear them in the room, see them bounce off the walls. Or perhaps the words are silently murmured so no one can hear them.

Did Emily Dickinson write in secret? Emily Dickinson wrote in a time when not many women wrote at all. Not all women were literate and only the affluent would have time to write. Women wrote letters though. Careful depictions of everyday events, stories of the lives of family and friends. Letters that could take a long time to reach the recipient. Read and cherished, kept, saved. Tied with a blue ribbon. So, were these poems in fact letters to someone long gone? Letters to herself? Letters to something divine?

The image of a woman sitting alone by the window, writing. Writing for years. Words that would be read by someone else only decades later.

Her hand moving over paper, her thoughts hovering in the air. Someone must have provided her with paper. Lots of paper perhaps. Crumpled, discarded pages on the floor, hidden under the bed, burnt in the fireplace. Did she have a favourite type of paper, a pen she favoured?

She could observe the changing of seasons through the window. This window seems important. She can see the world through the window, but the cold surface of the window separates her, and her illness, from the world. Did she like being an observer, did the world scare her? Perhaps she wanted to engage with the world in a way that was not suitable, acceptable, appropriate. Did she choose a life by the window or was this life forced upon her?

Nina: Emily Dickinson's poetry can be found in a song cycle by Aaron Copland. I have sung a few of these songs, badly I must admit. But I remember the excitement I felt in interpreting her words through music. Her words were sung in a room more than 150 years later. Would she have liked the music? Would she have approved of how her words had been shaped to music, performed in this room? I imagine the rhythm of the music would not have been exactly the same as the rhythm she imagined. Once her poems left her room, they were no longer hers. They became ours.

Why - do they shut me out of Heaven?

Did I sing too loud?

But I can say little 'Minor'.

Timid as a bird!

(First lines of Emily Dickinson's poem

'Why do they shut me out of Heaven?')

Waiting, to be called

'Be patient, it will come',

'Be patient, your turn will come',

We are taught from a young age to be patient,

Inferring a ladylike quality.

'Wait your turn',

'Don't speak out of turn',

This is a life for some women,

Academic women.

Wait patiently, backstage,

Invisible, overlooked,

The call comes,

Time to serve,
Go forth,
Speak their language,
Be patient,
After all, patience is a virtue.

Suspending

Jenny: ‘I would like us to start by sharing some of our favourite readings and how that inspires our writing....’

That’s me, starting off the second day in the PhD course entitled: *When writing matters: Exploring writing as inquiry*. The day before, we had explored writing as inquiry in different ways, and this second day was devoted to the theme of reading and the relationships between reading and writing.

However, as I uttered these words, at the same time as the 15 participants got ready for the day by setting up their laptops, coffee cups, notebooks and printed articles, it got entirely quiet. All the small organizing of people’s things just stopped.

I waited for a short while and thought that maybe they needed some more time to settle, before I kind of repeatedly said: ‘So, what have you read lately...?’

‘It’s very difficult to talk this way because I don’t read like that’, one of the doctoral students responded.

Yes, she is from the science department, I thought for myself, as I left some time for someone else to go next.

‘You know, I am not expecting to ‘waste’ time on reading, even though I would have loved that, and, also, the texts that I work with are not written to be read...’

In a nutshell, what these students are witnessing, one after the other, across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, is validating Michelle Boulous Walker’s (2017) critique in her book *Slow philosophy: Reading against the institution*. In this book, she draws our attention to how our reading in

academia is forced to engage with otherness in haste, leaving us largely untouched and with little trace of what we are encountering. To cope we develop reading practices that install a false feeling of certainty and security through containment. She calls this a 'desire to know'. A knowing that builds upon that which we already knew.

Jenny: I have noticed how my own reading habits have changed over time too. I find it more and more difficult to read, in particular books. I start somewhere, flip the pages, without letting myself sink into the world that the text invites. I am reading with a particular aim in mind, reading in relation to some project. Always quick to get to the next book if the current doesn't 'deliver'.

Impatience.

A term not so often spoken about in academic circles. The definition of 'impatience' according to Cambridge Dictionary, is 'the feeling of being annoyed by someone's mistakes or because you have to wait.' The listed synonyms included words like anger, annoyance, frustration, fury and rage.

In contrast to the annoyed and hurried reading, Boulous Walker (2017) envisions a 'love of wisdom' in academia; a reading that cherishes suspension by pausing, meandering and bypassing the demands of calculative thought. This form of reading, furthermore, holds the possibility to transform 'the everyday world of nearness into the strange and the surprising, thus permitting us both an ethical and aesthetic opening to the other' (Boulous Walker, 2017: 185).

The 'love of wisdom' that Boulous Walker articulates started in her reading of Levinas, on the ethical act of patience. From reading Levinas deeply, she noted how we, in order to not reduce the world to our pre-existing categories and understandings, need an encounter with the other (or strangeness of the other) that does not rush to reduce the other back to what I already know or can understand. This is an ethical relation where '[p]atience involves exposing and subjecting myself to the other; coming near, in order that a relation be established and the work of ethics done' (Boulous Walker, 2017: 57).

What does an ethical act of patience have to do with *ephemera*? In the inaugural editorial introduction to *ephemera*, the editors envisioned the new

journal to be ‘a space for the articulation of alternative models of change, with the aim of imagining ‘possibilities of something radically different to the present’ (Böhm, Jones and Land, 2001: 4). Importantly, they continued, this ‘will only become possible if we remain attuned to the need for a sympathetic engagement, one which is not just dismissive or oppositional, but which seeks to enter into *dialogue*’ (Böhm, Jones and Land, 2001: 4, emphasis in original).

The dialogic intentions of *ephemera* comes through in a multitude of ways that makes a difference for how the journal is set-up and governed, even if that could be seen as time-consuming. Since *ephemera*’s inaugural issue contributors and readers of the journal have witnessed its sustained commitment to open access publishing, allowing the papers to be read outside of narrowly defined scientific communities. The journal is governed and edited as a collective. And, as Martyna Sliwa stated in her review of the paper, *ephemera* has a tradition of contesting ‘journal rankings and the formulaic way of writing that so called ‘top’ journals promote.’ This way *ephemera*’s scope includes writing that contests phallogocentric ways of writing (see for example, Just, Muhr and Risberg: 2018) and it aims for a democratic and friendship-based ethos. A collective approach to patience makes a difference to scholarship and publishing.

Enduring

Such critical, engaged dialogue that the founders of *ephemera* wanted to make room for starts with listening, in receiving the words from others. This form of listening, through reading, is evident in Virginia Woolf’s (1932) essay, ‘How should one read a book?’ Here, she is emphasizing the need to meet a new text with openness. In response to the difficulty of setting us free from our preconceptions of that which we read, we need to engage slowly, and with care. Otherwise, she warns us, if ‘you hang back, and reserve and criticize at first, you are preventing yourself from getting the fullest possible value from what you read’ (*ibid*: 9). And she continues, we have to teach ourselves how to engage with texts in such a way that we can:

wait for the dust of reading to settle; for the conflict and questioning to die down; walk, talk, pull the dead petals from a rose, or fall asleep. (Woolf, 1932: 22)

To even fall asleep. This is far from the academia that we are familiar with where we are juggling a multitude of roles and projects, projects to start and projects to end. Can we even allow ourselves a moment of writing without a project to fulfil? In this setting, patience is not part of the vocabulary.

Jenny: In the Swedish language (the native language of Nina and I), the word for patience is 'tålmod'. It is a word that contains two parts: 'tåla' + 'mod'.

'Tåla', translated with 'endurance', to put up with, over time.

'Mod' means 'courage'.

Tålmod = to have the courage to endure over time.

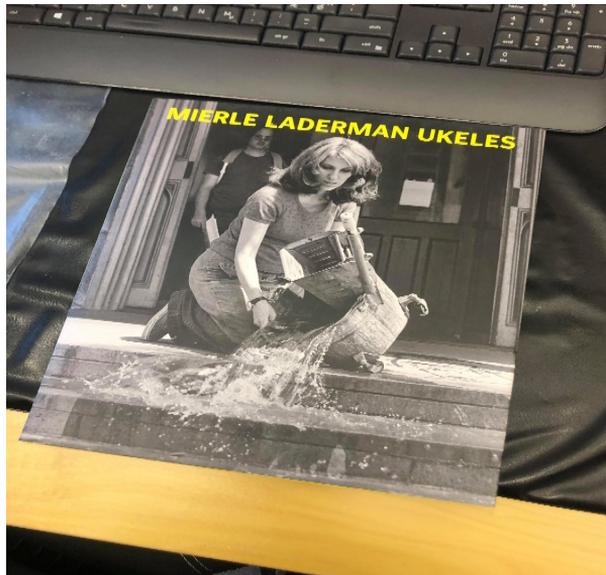


Image 1: Photo author's own.

Maintaining

Maintenance art is a movement founded by the artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles in the late 1960s. After childbirth, Ukeles recognized she could no longer be the avant-garde artist she wanted, given all the maintenance she had to carry out. In rage, in one sitting, she wrote the three-and-a-half-page typewritten *MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART 1969! Proposal for an exhibition 'CARE'*. The manifesto is divided into two parts. In the first part, she elaborated on what she calls 'two basic systems', where she puts 'development' and 'maintenance' up against each other. In the questioning of why art has been solely connected to the creation of the new, of the individuals (the artists) development of the object of art, she wrote:

Two basic systems: Development and Maintenance. The sourball of every revolution: after the revolution, who's going to pick up the garbage on Monday morning?

Development: pure individual creation; the new; change; progress; advance; excitement; flight or fleeing.

Maintenance: keep the dust off the pure individual creation; preserve the new; sustain the change; protect progress; defend and prolong the advance; renew the excitement; repeat the flight.

The problem Ukeles had identified is that society values development, while maintenance 'takes all the fucking time'. This manifesto is not only a call to clash with the patriarchal structures that kept women, just as all maintenance work, hidden, but also a critique of how we understand change.

In her critique of what art and creation is and can be, Ukeles ends her manifesto with a description of her upcoming exhibition – entitled *Care* – where she in different ways would make the maintenance work present and visible. For years to come, she worked with maintenance art, in an institutional critique, where she shows the creative act in maintaining over time and the care that involves towards family, city and the Earth. Maintain, derived from the Latin root *manu tenere*, which means to 'hold in the hand', conveys more tenderness than we usually think of. Ukeles shows that through her many artworks, often carried out outside formal art institutions. This way she bridges feminism, environmentalism, and participatory art practice. In

one of her projects, *Touch sanitation*, she shook hands and thanked each of the 8,500 sanitary workers that through their invisible work make sure New York City is clean and alive, day after day. A work task without a beginning and end. Work without a project?

As an artist, I tried to burn an image into the public eye, by shaking shaking shaking hands, that this is human system that keep New York City alive, that when you throw something out, there's no 'out. Rather there's a human being who has to lift it, haul it, get injured because of it (highest injury rate of any US occupation), dispose it, 20,000 tons every day. Our garbage, not theirs. (Mierle Laderman Ukeles, in Philips, 2016: 216)

The *Touch sanitation* handshake project showed the 'hand-energy', by literally shaking hands with those that handle the waste of the city (Baraitser, 2017). This way, patience involves a complex and ambiguous act of permitting, but also the holding back of force, energy, movement. If nothing else, patience requires attention; an attentive intimacy towards those, and that, which we care about.



Image 2: Photo author's own

Standing, still

Branches follow clouds,

trunks follow branches.

Fragile, brittle leaves overhead

suspended, gently hanging,

waiting patiently for them to drop

from grey solid branches.

Gusty wind circulates between woody connections,

fluttering of leaves.

Inhale, exhale, repeat.

Back pressed on the bark of the trunk,

Hard, rough torso exfoliating skin,

Neck stretched.

Cheeks rosy, skin dry, lips cracking red.

Look up.

Blue and white pierce through empty branches,

leaves fall cascading,

zigzagging their way through the air.

Gliding like seagulls on a sunny day.

Close to the unfamiliar,

far from the familiar,

Together, yet apart.

Moving. Still.

Inhale, exhale, repeat.

...the wonderment we may feel as human beings when standing under trees that have witnessed their surroundings for hundreds and, in some cases thousands of years. (Hobbs and West, 2020: 7)

Arches overhead, roofs shelter,
Familiar intimacy within the arms of the trees,
A home for wood of and for many,
Slow passing of time,
Connecting, relating,
Taken away from never-ending demands,
Call-centre lives, locked-in, locked-down,
Technological chains trapping bodies,
Connection, care, meaning,
Living, as if we had all the time in the world.

Tasmanian Blue, Gum Eucalyptus globulus – an ability to adapt to fire

Eucalyptus oil is flammable, so the shed bark and fallen leaves of the tree serve as ideal fuel for a forest fire. Once the fire has burnt itself out, however, with most competition eliminated, the tree is reborn from dormant buds beneath its charred bark. The seed capsules open in the heat, and the ash-rich soil is perfect for germination. (Hobbs and West, 2020: 20)



Image 3: Photo author's own.

Silver Birch, Betula pendula: 'lady of the woods'

Birch rarely lives to a great age, but where it is happy it grows and spreads quickly, its smooth, thin, dark-purplish-brown twigs have what look like small warts. The buds open in April, revealing long-stalked serrated-edged leaves with pointed tips. These leaves mature from pale to dark green, turning yellow in early autumn. (Hobbs and West, 2020: 200)

Remembering

Writing now and writing together builds on the legacies of those who came before us, including those who are no longer with us. When we write we have no knowledge of who will read the text, or whether and how it will be engaged with, an engagement that requires patience, duty or service to their writing. Women who paved the way for many other women to write. Writing against the tide, unaware of the impact that their work would have on those women who would come along behind them. They created texts that acknowledged women's place in thought and writing and they set a path to walk on, if we chose to. Heather Höpfl, drawing on Julia Kristeva (2000: 100) reminds us

... when a writer, male or female, confronts the text not only is there the anxiety of coming to wield the pen but also the more vertiginous confrontation of primal repression which Kristeva characterizes as ‘the ability of the speaking being, always already haunted by the Other, to divide, reject, repeat ... because of maternal anguish, unable to be satiated within the encompassing symbolic. (Kristeva 1982: 12)

And yet, having to constitute oneself in language, to achieve the separation from the Other by the abjection of the maternal. In other words, to achieve a semblance of autonomy in language, the Other, as Mother and as Feminine, must be rejected, separated, thrown off. In writing, this means conforming to the authority of the patriarchal discourse. Hence, it is salutary to consider what it means to speak of a ‘submission to a journal’. It seems one can only submit to under such circumstances as a ‘man’.

The violence towards the feminine is palpable. Höpfl (2003: 26) wrote of the danger for women of male membership, becoming a virile member:

The idea that one must become a man in order to demonstrate discipline and commitment, at least to conform to the appearance of a male conception of order, is an important matter. To become a ‘member’ a woman must render herself homomorphic. To be rendered first androgynous is, hence, to be set apart from, or in other words, abjected from, the capacity for bodily reproduction as a condition for male membership. The reward of membership is given for being more fully conformed to the symbolic order, for homologation. This is a bizarre transgression by which the appropriation is by what is conferred rather than by what is taken. She is given a metaphorical member in order to become a member. By rendering real women, physical bodies into mere representations, the disruptive power of the female body is neutralized and made safe (cf. Irigaray, 1985; Warner, 1976). If the feminine threatens to subvert male order, then the move to confer the honorary penis, the metaphorical phallus, marks the reversal of the potential for transgression. The feminine is, thus, incorporated, and given membership by being made to conform with the phallogocentric order. It is ironic that the acquisition of the phallus as conferred in this way is represented as a triumph of feminism. Clearly, it is entirely the opposite of that. It is regulation via homologation and arises from the fact that men can only reproduce themselves hyper-abstractly.

The ‘normalization of the masculine-rational ideal’ (Rhodes and Pullen, 2018: 8) in academic standards and metrics is increasingly present and powerful, affecting the ways in which writing can be pursued in the context of academic work. Despite the best intentions of many who resist, these abstract gendered

systems assimilate and make virile 'outputs' that produce 'impact'. Höpfl teaches us that we need to learn to transgress the masculine order and refute submission to patriarchal discourse and authority. How can we reimagine writing beyond, as Genevieve Lloyd (1984: 1) writes, in Western cultures,

rational knowledge has been constructed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind.

What would a future where the feminine is no longer assigned to the margins in this masculine-rational realm look like?

estrangement

abjection from

the symbolic order

refusal

to be left

behind

patriarchy thrives on

disconnection from women

women's writing

determination

relational

enduring

commitment to move forward over time

re-learning to live liveable lives

empathy and compassion

collaborative relations which rupture

letters wait in the wings

writing connections.

Who will be remembered when we enter this un-familiar terrain? In reviewing this text, Mie Plotnikof asked us: ‘I become curious to know a bit more as to how writing differently might enable other effects and affects as “research impact”? Without instrumentalizing it, how may we become touched by challenging academic writing with patience? And who/what can become a patient writer?’

Walking

Under foot,
greener than usual,
thick plush carpet underfoot.

More rain than usual,
feet sink,
into this velvety cushion.

Leaves fall...
slow motion,
cascading through thin rain.

Falling leaves,
changed colour,

New season, time sped up.

Birds louder.

Yellow crested cockatoos gleeful,
flying together gathering speed,
groups combine,

an impressive assembly of white stars against the blue sky.

Black crystals arrive, a quaking mass of black and white cockatoos.

Hurried movement,
migration,
Freedom across borders,
enviable.
Fragile, intimate, connections,
permeating ego-centric individuals,
humans and non-human intercorporeality.
Slowly,
Gently,
Caring.

Caring

The act of writing gifts a traversing of time and space, intimate solace to enduring life and whilst not ignoring obstacles to write. When writing becomes an affective intimacy with others, especially when there is no project or submission in mind; it defies instrumental masculine rationality. Labouring in a climate that features haste and inherent carelessness requires us to deliberate on what we care about and what we care with. Care is a central feature of the slow scholarship movement which

is thoughtful, reflective, and the product of rumination – a kind of field testing against other ideas. It is carefully prepared, with fresh ideas, local when possible, and is best enjoyed leisurely, on one’s own or as part of a dialogue around a table with friends, family and colleagues. (Slow Scholarship, 2021: np.)

Deliberation asks us to be open, preventing closure, asking questions that may or may not be part of the writing task. Has women’s writing changed? Have women been patient for long enough? What could be the radical potential of patience for women’s transgression from the status of submitting – to patriarchy and the journal? How does patience give rise to ethics? It seems

that patience disrupts the order of things; enduring time whilst writing and reading and carefully and often painstakingly passing through time until the words arrive – often very slowly.

Reflecting on how knowledge is produced and written, being patient enables relational work (Fletcher, 2001) based on trust and care between us, and with the community in mind. This is writing, which is often written repeatedly, not to get ‘right’ for the reader, but to ensure that the writers are connected to the text. Writing patiently encourages reflection with words, intimacy, and care beyond transactional economies. The potential of writing beyond rigid hierarchies that divide. Being patient prevents impulsive relationships, quick judgements, and the inevitable violence that pursues whether through collectively writing with others or through the review and editorial processes. Critical engaged dialogue in *ephemera* offers a space for patient reading and writing, and as Lena Olaison reminded us in her editorial letter *ephemera* helps ‘shape a “world in-between”’ the theory and politics of organization studies, where writing can evade norms between classification, hierarchy and conformity to standards.

Writing patiently, or indeed learning to write with patience, prevents the epistemic violence between the knower and the known, the rational and emotional, the disembodied and embodied. In this way, patience ruptures systems that lack patience, it teaches us to breathe, and it teaches us of the importance of writing which breaths. Waiting to write, and when the time comes writing with patience in mind, embodies a care ethics that is relational, contextualized, embodied, and realized through practices. Such care ethics is political and destabilises intersecting hierarchies of power and privilege. Gilligan (1995: 122) makes the important distinction between a feminine ethic of care and a feminist ethic of care:

Care as a feminine ethic is an ethic of special obligations and interpersonal relationships. Selflessness or self-sacrifice is built into the very definition of care when caring is premised on an opposition between relationships and self-development. A feminine ethic of care is an ethic of the relational world as that world appears within a patriarchal social order: that is, as a world apart, separated politically and psychologically from a realm of individual autonomy and freedom which is the realm of justice and contractual obligation. A feminist ethic of care begins with connection, theorized as primary and seen as

fundamental in human life. People live in connection with one another; human lives are interwoven in a myriad of subtle and not so subtle ways. A feminist ethic of care reveals the disconnections in a feminine ethic of care as problems of relationship.

What if academic writing and reading would be an expression of friendship rather than competition? In an ideal world, academic work is directed to advancing knowledge. To do good in the world – through grassroots activism, challenging dogma and promoting alternative ways of developing scholarly communities, as *ephemera* have shown since inception. The risks are that emerging norms are reproduced which mimic the norms that the journal stands against. Writing is controlled by the institutions of which we are a part, from universities to publishing houses. Editors and reviewers control the processes of writing; often ensuring compliance to journal norms and academic standards. How can we inhabit scholarly spaces without control of what is read and written? A feminist ethic of care provides inspiration for alternative ways of inhabiting spaces, the responsibility of collective organizing practices beyond individuals. However patient writing may be a privilege afforded to those not in precarious positions, doctoral students and non-tenured faculty (see Mendick, 2014) for a discussion on the gendered and classed relations of slow scholarship). Writing as a friend, reading as a friend, reviewing as a friend. Practices drawing upon empathy and care. Feminist ethics of care draws on corporeal generosity (Diprose, 2002). The intimacy of embodied writing, writing that touches, writing that leaves traces on our bodies, reading that marks our bodies. Words written in blood.

Friendship directs us to openness in writing, writing without fear of rejection. Our friends will still be there once the text has been written, once the text has been read. The words we write are our gifts to the world, but the act of giving and receiving creates friendships. For Jane Bennett (2001), enchantment is a way to understand our affective and embodied attachment to the world. To be enchanted is to experience a moment in the flux of everyday life, when something stirs, disturbs or moves you. This moment of enchantment in Jane Bennett's ethics holds great potential. This is the moment when we are vulnerable and open for change. In this enchanted moment, we can allow others in. 'Affect can join narcissism, beauty can serve violence, and enchantment can foster cruelty' (Bennett, 2001: 148). And yet the potentiality

in this moment, this brief encounter with the world, nature, a text, a friend, is worth pursuing. With friendship as a starting point, words are written with love. Words are read with love.

Breathing

There is nothing more natural than breathing. It just happens, without thought or purpose. And yet, we can take control of our breathing, we can learn to breathe better. Deep, slow breaths lower our blood pressure, calm the nervous system, relieve anxiety. Standing on a cliff overlooking the ocean, breathing becomes a profound experience – opening the lungs to the world. Walking in the woods when the trees are in autumn foliage, the bright colours, fresh air, the faint smell of winter lingering. The sound of crunching snow under your feet. The cold air tickling your nose. The changing of seasons, the paces of breaths, the rhythm of life.

We can learn to breathe together.

Noticing

Jenny: In a messenger conversation with a friend, she wrote: ‘There is something endlessly fascinating about timescales and events that unfold at such slow paces that we don’t register them. ... Like the crisis of Covid-19, the climate crisis, etc. We register them, officially, sometimes, but we don’t know what to do with them.’ She draws attention to the point that our current tools and methods are out of order, in terms of noticing these slower patterns. How can we go on, when the big-plan-way-of-working doesn’t hold any longer?

In *The care manifesto* (2020: 97), the authors notice that

...in our current moment of rupture, where neoliberal norms are crumbling, we have a rare opportunity. Awareness of our systemic carelessness across all social hierarchies has begun to appear everywhere.

The time has come. And they continue, there is a need for us to be ‘building more enduring and participatory caring outlooks, contexts and infrastructures, wherever we can’ (*ibid.*: 97). In this creation, we would argue, patience has a vital role to play “to stir up”, “to make cloudy”, “to disturb” (Haraway, 2016: 1). Caring to be more patient, or after Mountz et al. (2015), to make the feminist case for collectively slowing down as an act of resistance in neoliberal academia.

This form of patience, which enables us to be noticing otherwise, has also been acknowledged in a recent special issue in *ephemera*, on the notion of ‘standby’ (Kemmer et al., 2021: 1):

If we mobilize the concept as a lens through which to observe social phenomena, standby can be understood as a state of ‘in|activity’ that indicates readiness without immediate engagement, but that nevertheless requires and generates energy, resources, and relations. As such, we explore the notion of standby as a mode of organizing that integrates new materialist, affect-theoretical and time-space-focused approaches to denote a field of tension between the contingent and persistent, between the exceptional and ordinary, between the human and nonhuman.

To be noticing otherwise, in particular ourselves, was exactly the point in Mierle Laderman Ukeles art initiative *The social mirror*, in which she covered a New York City Department of Sanitation truck entirely in mirrored glass. How do we react, when we, at least, have to face ourselves in relation to our own trash, something we have outsourced to invisible others in our modern society?

Staying

Being patient offers opportunities for ‘learning to be truly present’ (Haraway, 2016: 1) and to ‘stay with the trouble’ (Haraway, 2016), especially in the context of ‘learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged earth will prove more conducive to the kind of thinking that would provide the means to building more liveable futures’ (*ibid.*: 2). Feminist technoscience studies scholar Haraway who defines herself as a multi-species

feminist writing, drawing on Marylyn Strathern's commitment to the 'relentless contingency' of relations with relations (Haraway, 2016: 34), proposes that in thinking about the:

world is a verb ... worlding is the dynamics of intra-action' (Karen Barad's word from *Meeting the universe halfway*) where 'partners' [such as books, trees, flying foxes] do not precede the relating. This is interesting for thinking about the ways in which writing unfolds in the entanglements and intra-actions that we become part of as we go about our daily lives.

Haraway introduces readers to the idea of intra-patience, something that we have experienced in being together writing this text, that there is a 'giving and receiving of patterning, all the way down, with consequences for who lives and who dies and how' (Haraway, 2013: np.).

For writing patiently words written down are co-created by us, through the intra-actions we have had over many years. We talk but we do not talk about writing. We write from the patterns emerging from relations, and the trees, books, people, animals, objects that are part of our worlding. Nina drinking coffee and eating freshly baked bread in Stockholm, Jenny taking the ferry home after a short break with friends, Alison curled up sick with her dogs. As two of us go to bed, the other one rises, and the reverse. Our mornings and bedtimes have become part of our intra-actions, an illustration of intra-patience as we work across time-zones. What would writing look like if we fully considered intra-patience? We would write less for sure, and the nature of written outcomes would be considered to not think about their impact but rather the ways in which such writing was produced. How would theoretical development look? Would we only be able to announce theory-building after years of careful consideration rather than at the end of a NVivo analysis on data that had been collected quickly? What methods would enable us to work intra-actively both in the classroom and in the field? In our own attempts, Jenny, together with colleagues, bought a countryside caravan for their fieldwork, which turned out to enable them an enduring capacity to reconnect to the moment of inquiry, the place, each other, and themselves (Helin et al., 2019). Alison, together with Anu Valtonen (2021), in their engagement with rocks remind us of the importance to be continually curious. Nina, writing about grief, shows how our past forms us (Kivinen, 2021).

Writing would stay with and reflect curiosity with the world, the books, trees and leaves. Writing about Hannah Arendt and Virginia Woolf, Haraway notes that

both understood the high stakes of training the mind and imagination to go visiting, to venture off the beaten path to meet unexpected, non-natal kin, and to strike up conversations, to pose and respond to interesting questions to pose something unanticipated, to take up the unasked-for-obligations of having met. (Haraway, 2016: 130)

This, for Haraway, is ‘cultivating response-ability’. She continues writing by engaging with the mundane:

Visiting is not a heroic practice; making a fuss is not the Revolution; thinking with each other is not Thought. Opening up versions so stories can be ongoing is so mundane, so earth-bound. That is precisely the point. (*ibid.*: 130)

This is patience that needs to be endured and to keep saying and writing the same message over and over again; until change comes. In this way, an intra-patience is an ethical and political commitment to being in the world. It requires perseverance, as we have been taught during the pandemic.

Opening up to the world theoretically and methodologically after Haraway is an urgent necessity. Practically, after two years of being unable to transcend the immediate local, the world is about to re-open to us. There seems to be the same haste met with this challenge, and yet we ask how we can learn from the staying with the trouble to think anew, to develop new meanings, but it appears that many are ready to return to pre-pandemic life. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we are required to overcome the tendency to be immediate, impatient. To learn to live, work, write differently will require nurturing patience.

To us, trees seemed to offer another kind of saeculum, a longer timescale and deeper continuity, giving shelter from our ephemerality the way that a tree might offer literal shelter under its boughs. (Solnit, 2021: np.)

Beginning

In writing without a project, there is no conclusion as we know it, other than to start where we end. This is the beginning of our writing, a commitment to developing new ways of being patient and writing patiently. Throughout this text, we first noticed Emily Dickinson's writing of poetry, which has something timely to say about the personal in relation to patience. We then turned to Boulous Walker's work on reading, addressing the (im)patience we face today, in our academic community/our profession/the public. Moving on, through walking we met the trees, and moved to another world - to the world as a verb - which introduced us to patience in the world. Writing with patience is played out across these different spheres in ways that was not known to us before we wrote it but has shown itself in the discursive construction of our material experiences such as breathing, trusting relations of care and the ability to write without haste. Thus, intra-patience teaches us about acknowledging and caring about the relations which inform us that cast relations through writing, the tensions, and struggles, and with a focus on being in the world. This will be a recuperation project as much as a political project. Murphy's (2015) feminist health practice research calls for 'staying with the trouble' and 'unsettle care' as a positive affect and which moves, 'Beyond a simple politics of dismantling, unsettling is a politics of reckoning with a world already violated: it is a commitment to desedimenting relationships that set the political, economic, and geopolitical conditions of knowledge-making, world-making, forgetting, and world destruction' (Murphy, 2015: 732). This is the 'work of stirring up and putting into motion what is sedimented, of decentering and cracking open the smooth into accounts of the messy and the partial' (*ibid.*: 732), and we would add writing. Patience therefore is enduring 'the unhappy affects of staying in the trouble' (*ibid.*: 732).

Is the capacity to stay with, in particularly during troubling times, paving the way for a particular form of intimacy? Mierle Laderman Ukeles (in Philips 2016: 216), talked about this special kind of patience and intimacy that she noticed when she worked with her project *Touch sanitation*, the project where she shook hands with all the 8500 sanitary workers in the New York City:

... where you get called back to work with no choice after only eight hours off, for several days running, until your eyeballs turn inside out and you don't know what time it is. I ate with sanmen, often on curbsides when restaurants wouldn't serve them. I talked with them on audiotape and shot video throughout. Mostly I stayed behind the hopper, as they do – where you can't escape the scare of the wind, sheets of rain, beating sun, stumbling in the snow, when you get soaked from sweat inside your rain-gear and drenched outside anyhow, facing the stink and the ultimate jungle of juxtapositions that is garbage.

... I got enlightened about the expertise of balance, 20- to 30- year spans of strength, about camaraderie and life-death teamwork under such stress your hair could stand upon end, mostly about spirit even when there's zero moral and supreme endurance, dedication, keeping going no matter what comes at you.

Patience tends to be understood as a restriction upon oneself, but in the temporal breaking free from current writing norms and standards, writing with patience offers un-acknowledged pockets of freedom, for the writer, as well as the reader. Furthermore, writing with patience, without a conclusion as we know it, builds an expectation of an enduring reader. This is the invitation patience holds.

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