

Arvon Academics to General Readership masterclass

7th July 2026 7-9pm

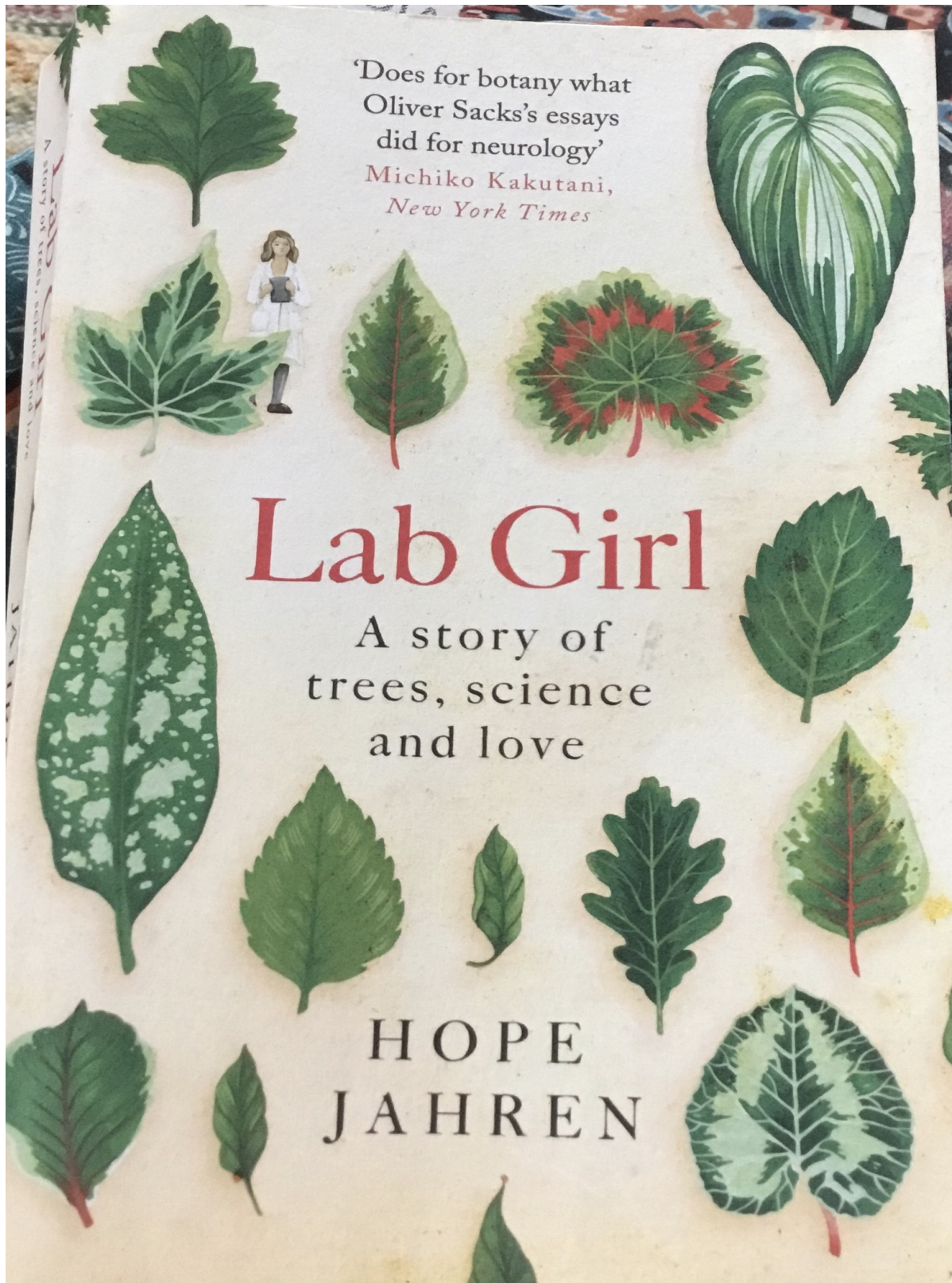
Materials

Tania Hershman

Website: www.taniahershman.com

Writing newsletter, workshops and writing prompts:

<https://taniahershman.substack.com/>



never stop building and wanting more. My laboratory is not "room T309," as stated on my university's blueprints; it is "the Jahren Laboratory" and it always will be, no matter where it is located. It bears my name because it is my home.

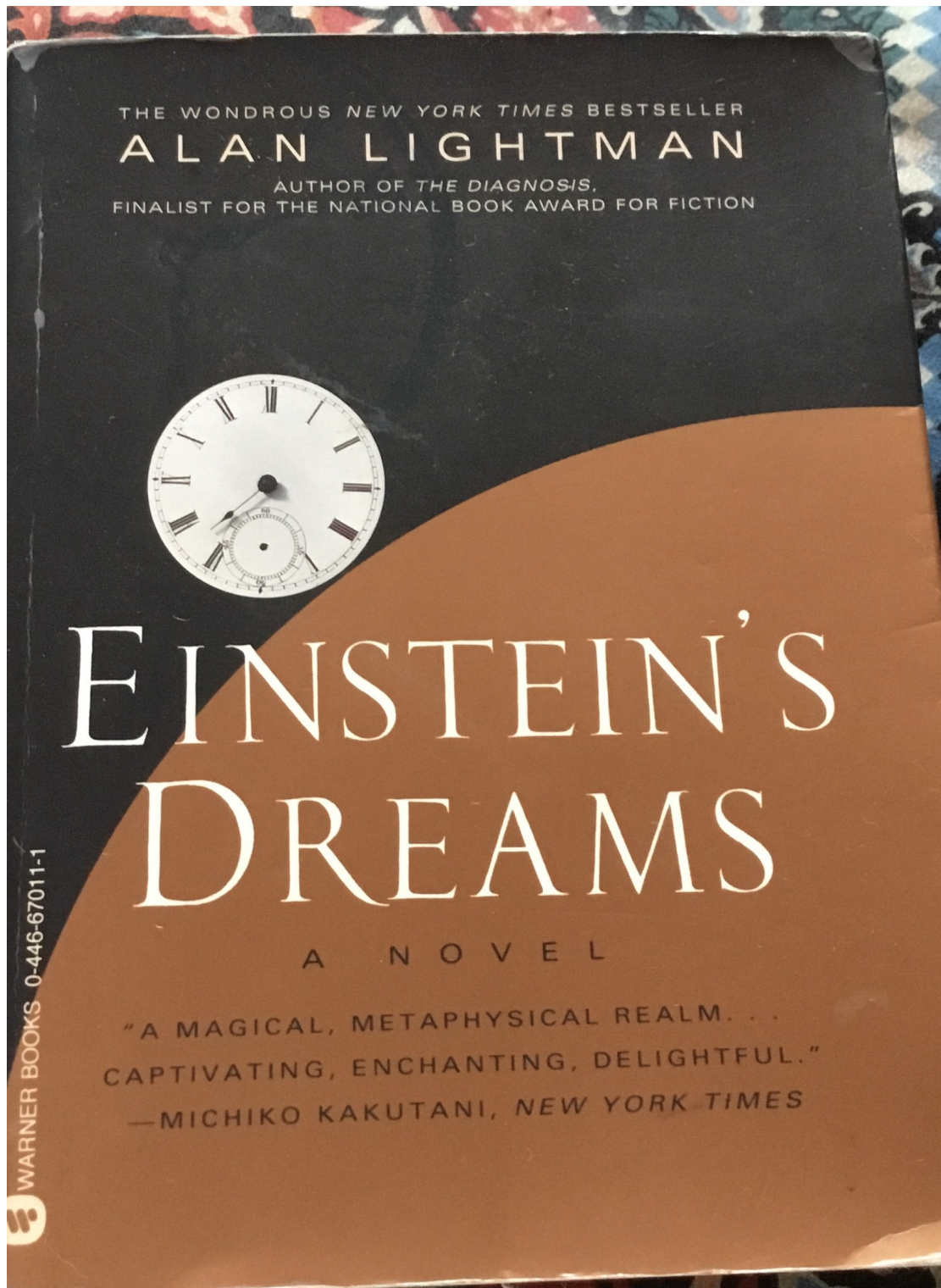
My laboratory is a place where the lights are always on. My laboratory has no windows, but it needs none. It is self-contained. It is its own world. My lab is both private and familiar, populated by a small number of people who know one another well. My lab is the place where I put my brain out on my fingers and I do things. My lab is a place where I move. I stand, walk, sit, fetch, carry, climb, and crawl. My lab is a place where it's just as well that I can't sleep, because there are so many things to do in the world besides that. My lab is a place where it matters if I get hurt. There are warnings and rules designed to protect me. I wear gloves, glasses, and closed-toed shoes to shield myself against disastrous mistakes. In my lab, whatever I need is greatly outbalanced by what I have. The drawers are packed full with items that might come in handy. Every object in my lab—no matter how small or misshapen—exists for a reason, even if its purpose has not yet been found.

My lab is a place where my guilt over what I haven't done is supplanted by all of the things that I am getting done. My uncalled parents, unpaid credit cards, unwashed dishes, and unshaved legs pale in comparison to the noble breakthrough under pursuit. My lab is a place where I can be the child that I still am. It is the place where I play with my best friend. I can laugh in my lab and be ridiculous. I can work all night to analyze a rock that's a hundred million years old, because I need to know what it's made of before morning. All the baffling

3

A SEED KNOWS how to wait. Most seeds wait for at least a year before starting to grow; a cherry seed can wait for a hundred years with no problem. What exactly each seed is waiting for is known only to that seed. Some unique trigger-combination of temperature-moisture-light and many other things is required to convince a seed to jump off the deep end and take its chance—to take its one and only chance to grow.

A seed is alive while it waits. Every acorn on the ground is just as alive as the three-hundred-year-old oak tree that towers over it. Neither the seed nor the old oak is growing; they are both just waiting. Their waiting differs, however, in that the seed is waiting to flourish while the tree is only waiting to die. When you go into a forest you probably tend to look up at the plants that have grown so much taller than you ever could. You probably don't look down, where just beneath your single footprint sit hundreds of seeds, each one alive and waiting. They hope against hope for an opportunity that will probably never come. More than half of these seeds will



• 24 APRIL 1905

In this world, there are two times. There is mechanical time and there is body time. The first is as rigid and metallic as a massive pendulum of iron that swings back and forth, back and forth, back and forth. The second squirms and wriggles like a bluefish in a bay. The first is unyielding, predeter-

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mined. The second makes up its mind as it goes along.

Many are convinced that mechanical time does not exist. When they pass the giant clock on the Kramgasse they do not see it; nor do they hear its chimes while sending packages on Postgasse or strolling between flowers in the Rosengarten. They wear watches on their wrists, but only as ornaments or as courtesies to those who would give timepieces as gifts. They do not keep clocks in their houses. Instead, they listen to their heartbeats. They feel the rhythms of their moods and desires. Such people eat when they are hungry, go to their jobs at the millinery or the chemist's whenever they wake from their sleep, make love all hours of the day. Such people laugh at the thought of mechanical time. They know that time moves in fits and starts. They know that time struggles forward with a weight on its back when they are rushing an injured child to the hospital or bearing the

•14 MAY 1905

There is a place where time stands still. Raindrops hang motionless in air. Pendulums of clocks float mid-swing. Dogs raise their muzzles in silent howls. Pedestrians are frozen on the dusty streets, their legs cocked as if held by strings. The aromas of

dates, mangoes, coriander, cumin are suspended in space.

As a traveler approaches this place from any direction, he moves more and more slowly. His heartbeats grow farther apart, his breathing slackens, his temperature drops, his thoughts diminish, until he reaches dead center and stops. For this is the center of time. From this place, time travels outward in concentric circles—at rest at the center, slowly picking up speed at greater diameters.

Who would make pilgrimage to the center of time? Parents with children, and lovers.

And so, at the place where time stands still, one sees parents clutching their children, in a frozen embrace that will never let go. The beautiful young daughter with blue eyes and blond hair will never stop smiling the smile she smiles now, will never lose this soft pink glow on her cheeks, will never

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Einstein has been explaining to his friend Besso why he wants to know time. But he says nothing of his dreams. Soon they will be at Besso's house. Sometimes Einstein stays there through dinner, and Mileva has to come get him, toting their infant. That usually happens when Einstein is possessed with a new project, as he is now, and all through dinner he twitches his leg under the table. Einstein isn't good dinner company.

Einstein leans over to Besso, who is also short, and says, "I want to understand time because I want to get close to The Old One."

Besso nods in accord. But there are problems, which Besso points out. For one, perhaps The Old One is not interested in getting close to his creations, intelligent or not. For another, it is not obvious that knowledge is closeness. For yet another, this time project could be too big for a twenty-six-year-old.

On the other hand, Besso thinks that his friend might be capable of anything. Already this year, Einstein has completed his Ph.D. thesis, finished one paper on photons and another on Brownian motion. The current project actually began as an investigation of electricity and magnetism, which, Einstein suddenly announced one day, would require a reconception of time. Besso is dazzled by Einstein's ambition.

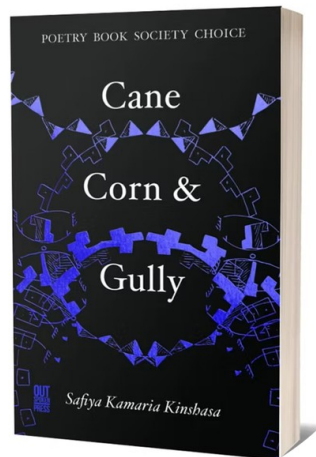
For a while, Besso leaves Einstein alone with his thoughts. He wonders what Anna has cooked for dinner and looks down a side street where a silver boat on the Aare glints in the low sun. As the two men walk, their footsteps softly click on the cobblestones. They have known each other since their student days in Zürich.

"Got a letter from my brother in Rome," says Besso. "He's coming to visit for a month. Anna likes him because he always compliments her figure." Einstein smiles

Safiya Kamaria Kinshasa

<https://www.safiyakamaria.com/>

A British born Barbadian PhD student in Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds. She is also a choreopoet who chiefly uses dance to compose her work. Her practice-led doctoral research interrogates the existing framing of dances performed by black Barbadian women to unearth buried narratives of Black femininity in Barbados. Safiya is applying Afro-diasporic dance techniques as part of her ethnographic fieldwork.



Cane, Corn & Gully (Outspoken Press, 2022)

Some places to watch and listen to her:

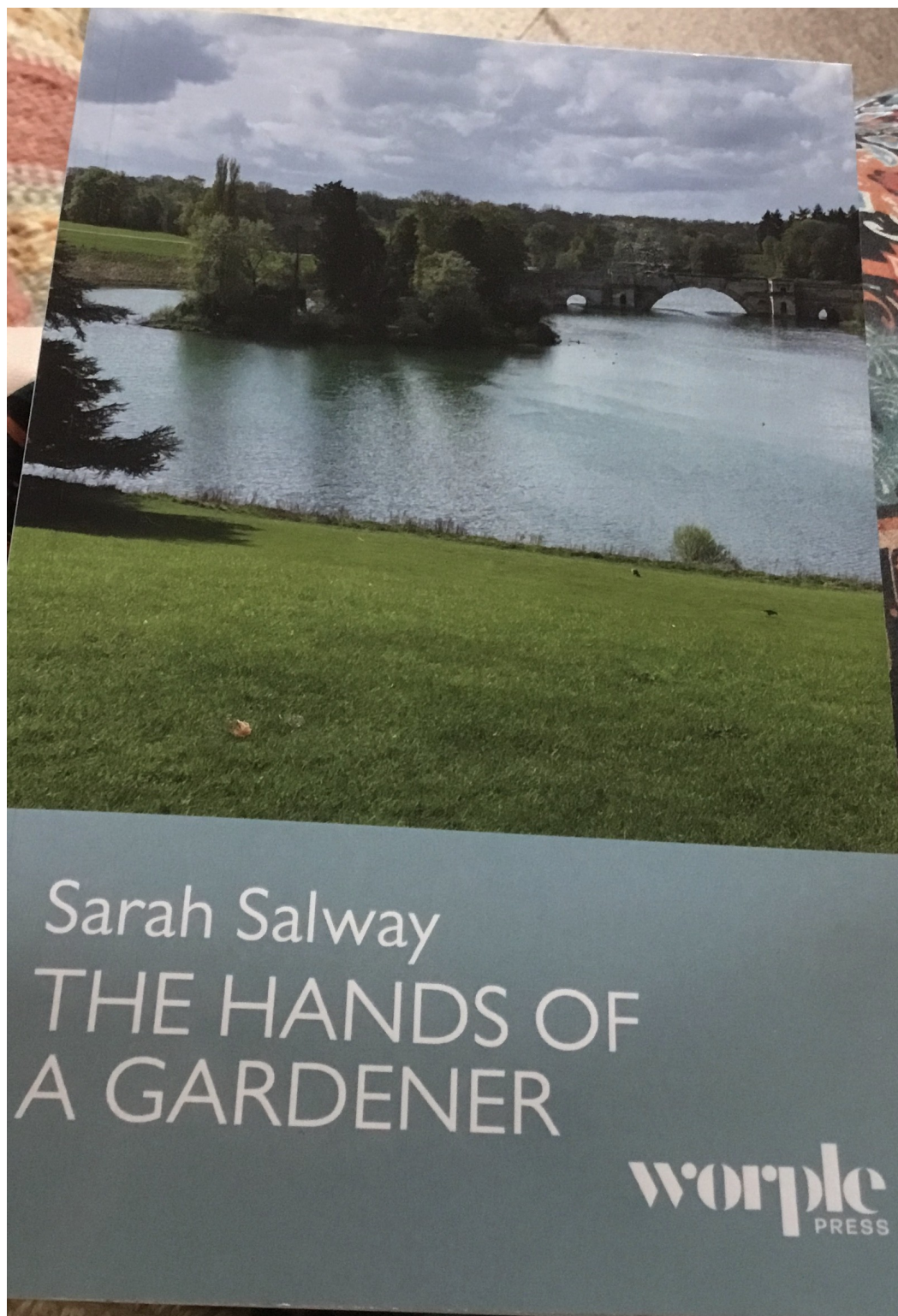
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHmyorgimkQ&t=485s>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DcijdBmXS0Y>



Dancing Beyond the Black: A New Afro-Diasporic Ethnographic Research Method

Hands of a Gardener by Sarah Salway (Worple Press, 2026)



Delightful Object

The desire for a garden was not mentioned
in the arrangement long ago negotiated
in stuffy drawing rooms when she, young
and delightful, could only smile,

and though later, striding through their grounds,
they'll argue over origins, this too
becomes a revelation at how they listen
to each other now, and so when they cross

the forever makeshift bridge
to visit the dam that forces water back,
there's silence, recognition of a power
that could still tumble it down,

because theirs is a story often told
though with many different outcomes,
and as they take the path winding home,
see views, lose their place, a very adult

hide-and-seek, they follow the thread of stream
up to the lake where their reflection shows
a most surprising sense of peace. Here
he'll unwind the map to point at Brown's scribble

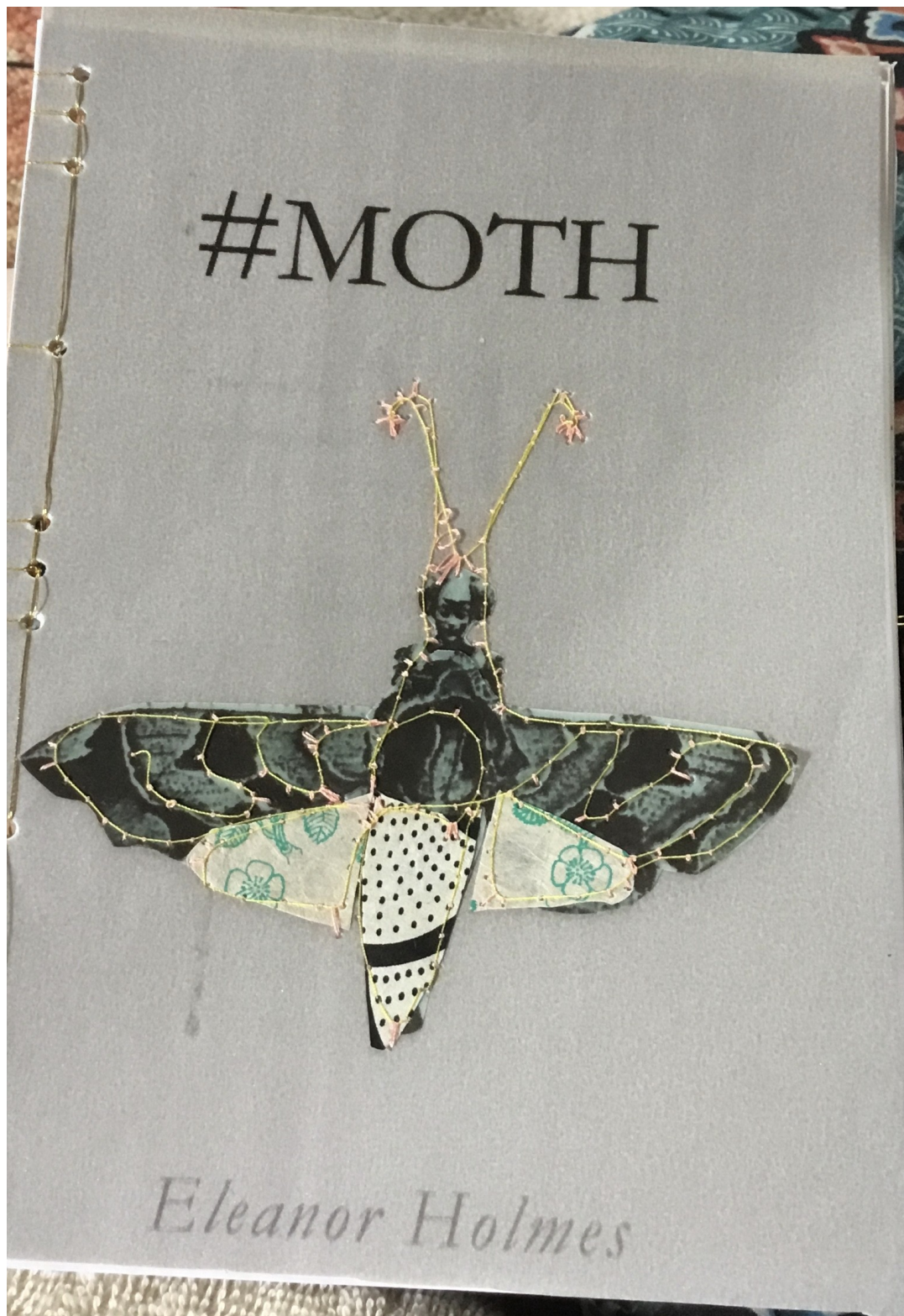
of a man fishing there, and she doesn't say
how Mr Brown drew not a man, but her,
and when she peers at it, which she often does,
she sees the plump trout he's caught her landing.

*One of the key gardening books in Lancelot's time is Batty Langley's, *New Principles of Gardening*, published in 1728. In it, Langley wrote – '... a rude coppice in the middle of a fine meadow is a delightful object.' At this time, the English common law of coverture means that the wealth of a woman is controlled by her husband on marriage so the settlement negotiations for the wealthy are often complicated and drawn out.*

Brown's under-gardener cherishes his plants

He lifts the watering can
in a state of worship,
each raindrop is his tongue
loosening the scaly skin
of what he never could say.
He peels away a dead leaf,
press fingertips against the spike
of a cactus which flowers
almost despite its new land.
He's helped to created paradise
but how easy to slip
off the edges, like the noble lady
who brushed past plants
without noticing how
they bloom for her.
He wants to say that she takes
the beauty of this world
for granted at her peril.
*Stop, says the weeping fig,
listen to me. Turn to the light
and tell me what it is you need.*

Lancelot was thought to have been responsible for around one hundred and seventy parks in total so obviously he couldn't manage them all single-handed. His on-site staff would have included Foremen, Surveyors, and Assistant landscapers, sometimes over 100 for one job. It's worth mentioning three names in particular: Samuel Lapidge, an accomplished surveyor and draftsman, who continued Brown's landscaping practice after his death; Nathaniel Richmond, a surveyor who worked closely with him; and the draughtsman, John Spyers. I don't remember where I read that Lancelot wasn't actually that keen on plants, but I wanted to give this passion to an unnamed under-gardener, another one forgotten by history.



Eggs etc.

Ovum, Larva, Pupa, Imago

know that I was born with my eggs
already counted,
poached, boiled, fried, scrambled,

Mother Earth went POP!

i rolled on down the fertile grass towards
my resting place,
all my insides, reassembled,
on the underside of a leaf.

Appearance may provide some clues as
to their lifestyle, current mental state, and ability to
care for themselves.

**When we sat down in that small consulting room,
I knew we had met before, but her appearance
was altered, dramatically so.**

Fur, golden*:

Visible on arms and legs. Skin underlying a hard pale grey substance, the kind that forms on the inside of water pipes, kettles etc.

Criss-cross of scars:

Silver-white and covering inner forearms to form something like a fine scale, or net, that gave the appearance of lace.

Legs crossed, stick-like:

Weight significantly under that expected for a woman her age (approximate age, given refusal to tell us her date of birth.)

Scapulae very prominent, almost winged:

Vertebrae visible, but long and lean musculature noted. Tall for a woman, taller than most men.

Stigmata of self-harm noted:

Entrance and exit wounds to upper thorax, between the veins of the wrists & ankles. V-shaped scars also noted in front of ears (noticeably elongated ears, and pointed chin, look up genetics.)

*Ears also covered in an extraordinary amount of fine, golden hair



Atlas

Attacus atlas

the golden fur
bestowed on me at birth

young girl's head
on heavily shoulders,

i was probably
a goddess when it

my duty to
two stars of

wings a
too heavy

citrus, or
scent my

to carry a
mouthparts removed

hangs like a weight

knows

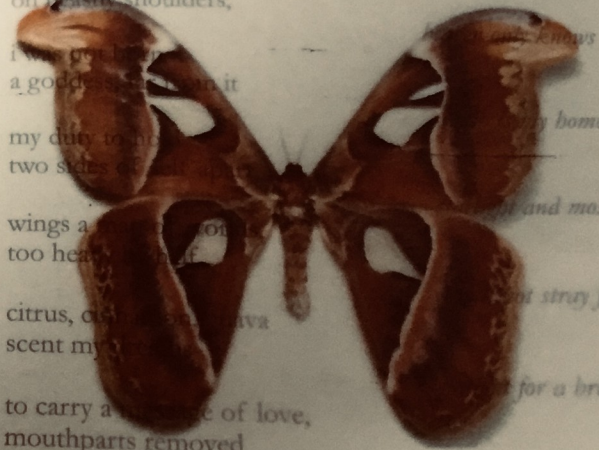
my home

and moss

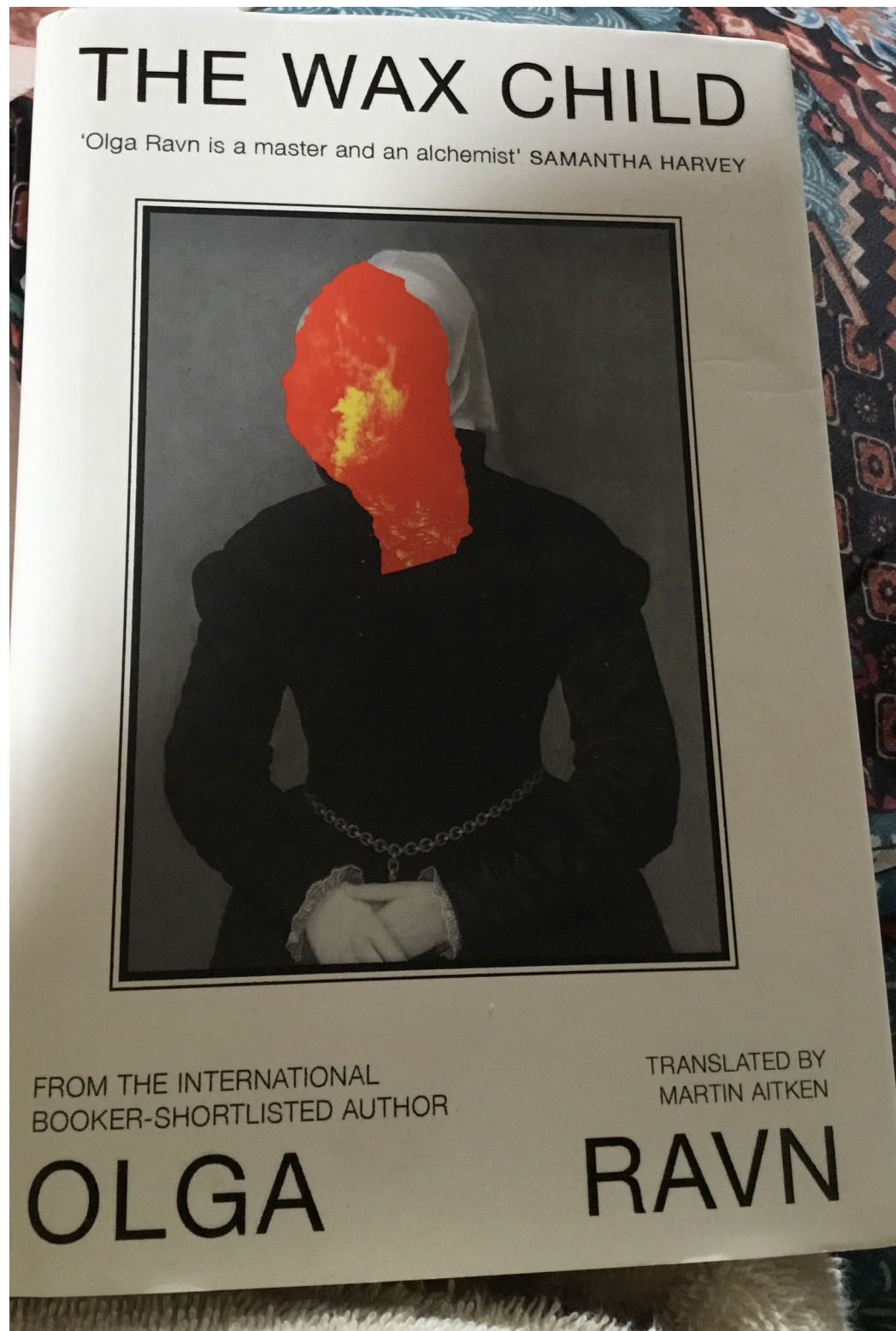
not stray far

for a breeze

silent with my burden



The Wax Child by Olga Ravn, translated from Danish by Martin Aitken (Penguin Random House, 2025)



present in the room fully comprehends what they are allowing out of its lair. And I, I am a wax child, secreted from the scaly glands of the honeybee's abdomen, of rose hip, propolis, pollen, dread, quince, longing, yeast dough, age, and ever young, with infinity's secret in my folds. They consult their ledger; they read aloud from it: Ale for the executioner, two nights: 2 marks. Reasonable, by any account, they say. Wait, there is more, they say: For five barrels of tar: 5 marks. A ladder for the girl: 20 shillings. For the executioner for putting her to her death: 9 daler. Payment to a man for assisting in her night-time capture: 4 daler, they say. No paltry sum, they say. Indeed, a handsome payment, they say, and continue. For the witnesses called to the hundred court: 5 marks. A pair of shoes for her, since she was barefoot when taken into custody: 3 marks, they say. Indeed, they say. Indeed, and again they continue: For the summons: 4 shillings. For the judgement of the provincial court: 6 marks. And then there was the boy clerk, a half-mark, the judgement of the hundred court, half a daler, bed and board for the provincial court, two nights, likewise half a daler, they say. And then too the cost of her detention, including payment for the ones who attended her those two nights, they say. That came to 3 marks, they say. And further: Has an amount been included for those who conducted the examination? To which they say, Not as far as can be seen. A mussel is alive as long as it is closed; this is the thought in Apelone's head. I don't think we should view it as a series

SEVEN STARTS TO THE WOMAN WHO WENT OVER THE FALLS IN A BARREL

Annie Edson Taylor, 1901

by Frankie McMillan (<https://www.cleavermagazine.com/seven-starts-to-the-woman-who-went-over-the-falls-in-a-barrel-by-frankie-mcmillan/>)

1

Picture the cold dark inside of the barrel. Annie feeling her way over the padded mattress to a harness hanging from the side. The barrel sways in the water. Picture her fastening herself upright into the harness, pulling the leather strap tight across her chest. Picture Annie flailing about, she can't find her lucky heart-shaped pillow. Now picture the barrel picking up speed, with the current, heading straight towards the falls.

2

It's not as if falling was something new. Early on, I fell from my crib, I fell through haystacks, I fell from grace, I fell behind the church to kiss the bridesmaids, I fell between heaven and hell then into marriage and when my good husband was taken off to war I fell into despair. When cholera came and took the baby I fell so low I did not know I'd fallen. I fell short of loving men. I fell into debt. I fell about the house; birds beat against the windows, mold grew upon the cheese. Yet in the dark I dreamed that fame could come with falling.

3

Us boatmen watch the wind fall. Then we anchor by Goat Island so we can get Mrs. Taylor and the barrel ready without too much sway. When she begins undressing, we turn our backs. Let the oars rest in the locks, listen to the falls. We'd done talking. We'd told her *no one* has ever survived going over in a barrel, it was madness it was. She was killing herself and on her *birthday*.

We turn around. She stands there, a man's coat flung over her shoulders. A big flowery hat on her head. Can't help but stare. The long barrel begins bobbing alongside the boat. Later it'll have white letters painted on it. *Heroine of Niagara Falls*. But we don't know that now.

We spit on our thumbs, hold them up to see which way the wind's coming.

4

If I hide my grey hair under a hat, if I lie about my age, I have my good reasons.

5

My poor head is full of measurements. The length of the barrel staves, the circumference of the iron hoops, the position of the bung hole, the exact weight of the anvil at the bottom so the barrel floats upright during the ride. I look the barrel maker in the eye. I tell him I have every expectation of surviving.

Night comes. I talk to my lucky heart-shaped pillow, I talk about the barrel maker, the boatmen, the beef-faced newspaper men, I talk about their buffoonery, their banter, and blather, I talk about the Buffalo Exposition, the crowds that await me, how lucky the timing was for my stunt, and I go on talking while candlelight gives such a ruby glow to the pillow I push my cheek into the plump mounds of silk and *Maude, Maude, Maude* I breathe though I don't know any Maude, not even a bridesmaid Maude and later, to knock some sense into my God-fearing self, I draw my knees up to my chin, listen to the noise of the falls and *brace, brace, brace*, I cry.

6

A huge crowd had gathered on the Goat Island bank. Some had been there the previous day when the wind got too fierce to get the barrel out. Over the noise of the falls, we hear snatches of a voice shouting from the wharf. *Mrs. Taylor, refined teacher of New York ...What are the bets ...Will she take the plunge...* We head around the inlet into view. The crowd erupts in cheers. Horns blast the air. We pause a bit as Mrs. Taylor stands in the boat, big hat on her head, her arms held out to the falls.

7

The noise from the falls grows louder. You are in a barrel heading for the plunge. You are still upright in the harness, arms crossed over your chest. Your lucky heart-shaped pillow, wedged under your chin. The barrel begins to spin. You are prepared, you tell yourself. You have planned for this. Below the boatmen are waiting. Below is your new life, fame and fortune. The noise is deafening. Happy birthday, you breathe into the red silk pillow. Happy birthday, you.

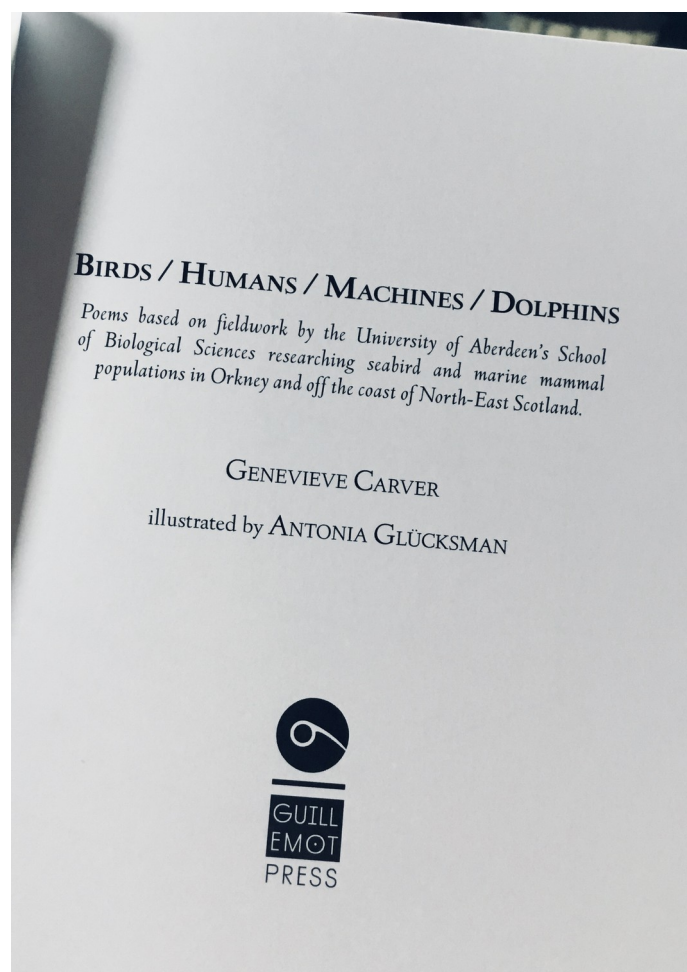
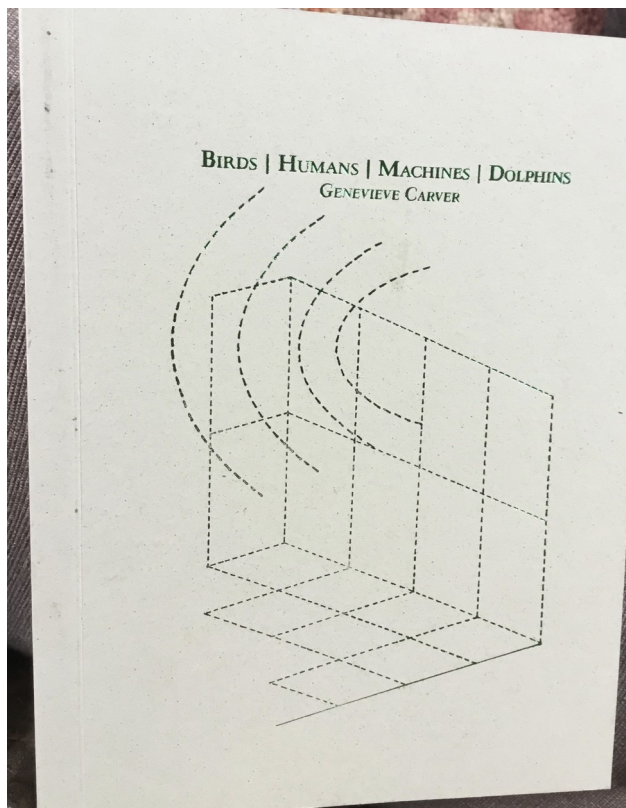
Bear Fragments

by CHRISTINE BYL (*Brevity, the journal of flash non-fiction*, <https://brevitymag.com/nonfiction/bear-fragments/>)

1. In the High Sierra, her first time sleeping in a tent, my friend Pilar from Barcelona is terrified. She is afraid of bears. She wipes toothpaste from the corners of her mouth, tucks her hair into the hood of her sleeping bag, and cinches it against cool alpine air. She stares at the nylon ceiling. She lies still as a log, attuned to any noise outside. All night she hears it—*rustle rustle*—a bear in the bushes, edging closer to her, closer. She freezes. Holds her breath. The noise stops. She relaxes. The noise begins, rhythmic: *rustle rustle*. At 5 a.m., exhausted, her eyes drift shut and—quiet. The sound is her eyelashes against the silky polyester of her sleeping bag. *Open, shut. Open, shut.* She blinks, stops the rustle, starts it again, stops, starts. The bear is in her bag. She sleeps.
2. A Lingit story tells of a woman who married a bear. From territory to region, village to clan to family, the story moves. Once, I heard this: if you are a woman, and a bear comes close, lift your shirt and show him your breasts. He will see you are a woman, and remember your kinship. He won't hurt you. I have never had to try.
3. Northern Rockies grizzlies mate in early summer, lumbering towards lowlands in May, meeting up in meadows of glacier lilies just pushed up through snow. For weeks, they do little more than loll and hump and goose each other, frisky or dutiful as aging lovers. The boar gives sperm in great jets. But a sow does not become pregnant then. Her body protects a fertilized egg, un-implanted, for months while she feeds, grows fat and slow on grub-moth-root-fish-beetle-seed. A bear cannot be pregnant before she is full. By late September, when food is leaving and the bear tires of gorging, the egg burrows into her uterine wall. The bear dens up. The cubs circle and twist inside of her; she breaths once, twice every few hours, her heart nearly stopped. Mid-winter, cubs are born. For months in the den, they suck the sow's milk-grub-moth-root-fish-beetle-seed while she lies on her side dreaming of glacier-liliated fields.
4. Bear a grudge bear fruit bear your burdens bear down bear out bear arms bear the cost bear scrutiny bear left at the corner bear my grief bear a child bear up under pressure bear in mind bear witness bear north.
5. In Glacier National Park, I knew a photographer. One morning in an alpine meadow Lester saw a bear across the hill, a dot on the horizon. "It looked pretty far away. I had to squint to see it," he said. Lester photographed the bear as it came closer and closer, steady and steady. He yelled, but it came up to him and stood and looked at him, and Lester fell down and played dead like you are supposed to, if a bear gets that close. The bear sniffed him and turned him over (ripped his skin open in long tears on his back) and licked him and sat on his leg (blew out his knee) and shit on his middle, a wet pile. The bear moved on. Lester can still hike, the wrecked knee fixed with metal plates. He still takes pictures in the mountains, awake to territory and perimeter. "I don't blame that bear for a thing it did," he said.
6. While his sister wasn't watching, a young boy wandered off. His village was in a mountainous area in Pakistan, and the family worried. The boy was only two. A search party looked for days without a sign. They were about to give up when one man found footprints outside a cave. Inside, the searchers saw the boy nestled with a bear, curled close to her side, both asleep. The men entering the cave woke the bear, and they shot her and returned the boy to his family. At a hospital, he was examined. The boy had no scratches on him, not a single mark. In the boy's belly? The milk of a bear.

7. The scent of a bear is a thick, greased wind. Close, you can smell it right away. It precedes any other trace in the air: blueberry or saw exhaust, spruce needle or wood smoke. Old and sharp. It brings to mind adrenaline and rot and sex, and everything I've ever known that's wild.

Birds/Humans/Machines/Dolphins by Genevieve Carver (Guillemot Press, 2024)



METHOD STATEMENT

Objectives

Make meaning of blubber and bone.

Render each creature more itself than it knows how.

Give purpose to porpoise, definition to dolphin.

Survey Design

Be go-between, medium, shapeshifter. Play fast and loose with the data. A translator with an agenda is an explosive thing.

Sampling Locations

Moray West – out past the gas graveyards, the oil-rig mausoleums. Out to where the gales are caught in wide white arms and thrown down ducts with electric gusto.

Moray East, where the monopods line up like ancient stone rows, the nacelles tremble with progress.

Beatrice, who dreams in watts and shakes the sandbank in her sleep.

Sampling Periods

Every time someone says 'slack tide'

When the cloud lifts, the unforgiving grey allows

When terns wear the Westerlies like Flamenco dresses

When flukes smack the ocean's skin like revellers collapsing on the dancefloor

In between coffee breaks

Methods

Sea swimming

Tongue clicking

Self-aware anthropomorphism

Notebooks with marine-themed covers

Blue ink

FIELD LOG

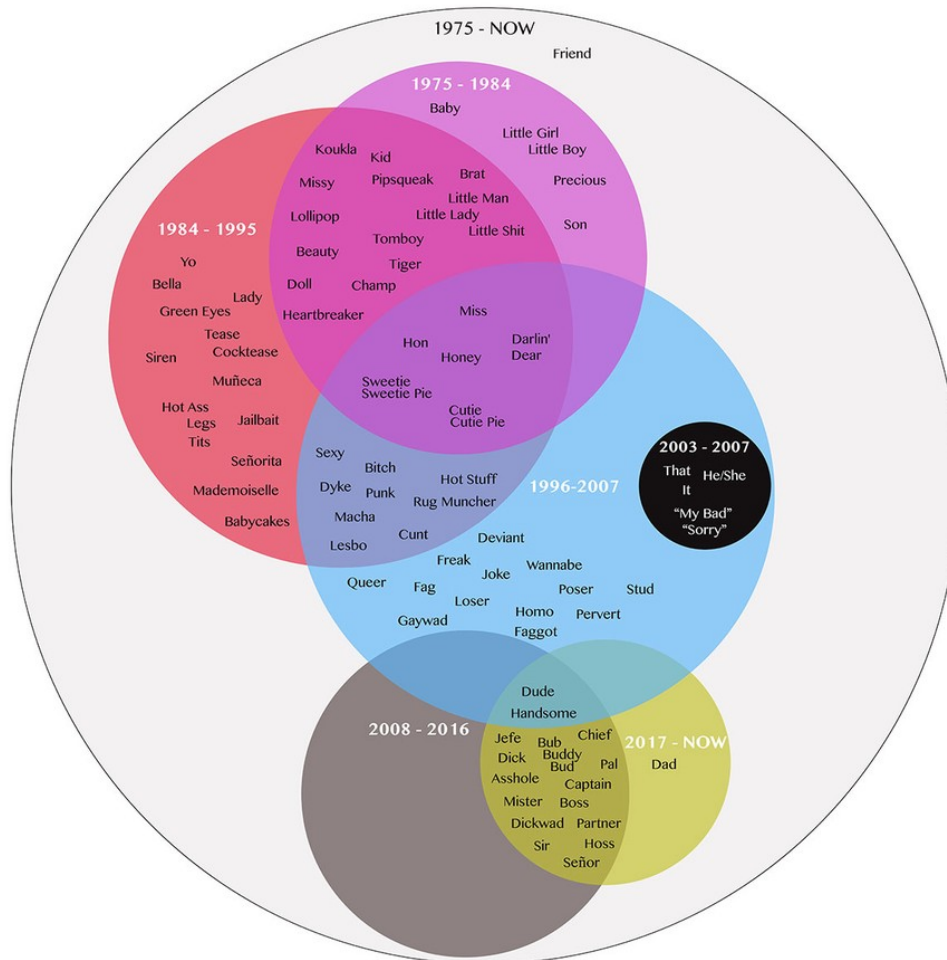
- Date: Almost autumn. A lull in the belligerent winds. Waning windows to retrieve data from the depths.
- Time: An hour beyond dawn. Two before low. We left the harbour at first light, in a swoon of swell and snooze.
- Location: Deep Blue / Big Wet / Whale Road / Muir / Cuan / Morimaru / Noordsee
- Latitude: Riga / Urals / Labrador / Nunviak
- Longitude: Brittany / Timbuktu / Atlantic / islands / ice
- C-POD depth: Subsurface but only just. Bobbing like a bad memory. Never coming up for air.
- C-POD recovered by: Numb hands. Wired eyes. Winches.
- Notes: The scientists move like termites. The boat like an angry drunk. The numbers dance. The turbines tremolo.

Names Strangers Have Called Me

by Amos Varos, https://thediagram.com/22_2/varos.html

NAMES
STRANGERS*
HAVE CALLED
ME
Amos Varos

*Cashiers,
bus drivers,
bartenders, baristas,
dog owners,
homeless people,
people in grocery
stores, officers,
people in bodegas,
construction
workers, commuters,
tour guides,
volunteers,
shoppers,
salespeople, docents,
office people,
car dealers,
card dealers
fish mongers, EMTs,
valets, greeters,
rabbits, people in
Target, dock
workers,
sex workers,
mail carriers,
pop
psychologists,
cab drivers,
sanitation workers,
buskers, buskers,
tourists, passers by,
concierges, curators,
servers, librarians,
protesters,
ticket takers,
proselytizers, park
rangers,
Boy Scouts, flight
attendants,
fire fighters,
delivery
drivers, line cooks,
sample givers,
people at farmers'
markets, zookeepers,
sign twitters, kids,
teenagers, adults,
other parents
at the park.



NAMES
STRANGERS*
HAVE CALLED
ME

Ames Varos

*Cashiers,
bus drivers,
bartenders, baristas,
dog owners,
homeless people,
people in grocery
stores, officers,
people in bodegas,
construction
workers,
commuters, tour
guides,
volunteers,
shoppers,
salespeople, docents,
office people,
car dealers,
card dealers
fish mongers, EMTs,
valets, priests,
rabbis, people in
Target, dock
workers,
sex workers,
mail carriers,
pop
psychologists,
cab drivers,
sanitation workers,
buskers, bussers,
tourists, passers by,
concierges, curators,
servers, librarians,
protesters,
ticket takers,

