



**NATURE
TO
THE DOGS**

ROSE SCHREIBER

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AWE IS THE FIRST WORD.....2

INTERLUDE.....48

BEING LATCHING ONTO BEING AND PULLING.....94

WHAT IS THE OPPOSITE.....118

HOW IS IT HOW IT IS.....122

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....138

IMAGE SOURCES.....139

The process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things “suffer a sea-change” and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living as “thought fragments” as something “rich and strange...”

Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations*

Like thee must I GO DOWN

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

A

Aaaaaaa- (Ahh)

Aw

eee

word.

Awe.
is the first



And I suppose you want me to start from the beginning. Although what a beginning is I have no idea. Nebulous concept since we are, and by necessity it seems, located somewhere always in an expanding middle. As well, choosing between one hundred, or a thousand—or perhaps only ten—concrete places to start is more difficult than choosing between some infinity of abstract ones, so I’ve heard at least, so they’ve been telling me. The real being so much more difficult to wrap one’s head around, so-to-speak. And this epistemic conundrum lying, some might say, at the crux of human nature—not that such an asininity exists anyway, I believe on faith. But in any case,

I will tell you



I saw branches, dead ones. Or rather, I saw what appeared to be branches but were perhaps only floating remnants, all empty husk and hollow tubing. Imagine a tree if a tree were an eggshell. And these lacking albumen, lacking yolk. It was all osseous structure, structure that was only skin, there being no depth, no cambium, no sapwood, no living inner mass, just eminently frangible mineral carapace. A tree swaddled in crystals where only crystals remain. Pure exoskeleton. Shroud over void. I recall the haunting absence of those vascular bundles, that meshy fabric of xylem and phloem, that would, in this life, in this world, have been spent passing, conducting, translocating earth materials into sky. Now, flute-like, only air passed through them, and they appeared to me as vacated metabolism, dry throat. Their vital tissue, hereafter, joined the choir invisible.

And these branches, some laid out in long processional lines, others more upright and leaning, were so much alluvium. This, according to not only their form—a danse macabre, sticks rocking, pitching into

one another, swept up, in mine's eye, by a current of peroxide, becoming driftwood amassed on phantom shore, lapped by foamic tide—but also their strata, each marked by a residual horizon line of what exactly I know not. And these formations flew. Adrift above the ground. None or meager was their footing. So, they floated in the air and if you were to shine a light powerfully upon them how many shadows do you think they would cast? *More shadows than you can count, should you be a shadow counter* (Everett). And so it was confusing to me whether they were a made thing or a found thing (Hopp)—I mean, whether someone had created them, authored them, *inspired* them in some wholly human way (Sloterdijk, *Bubbles*), or whether what I was seeing was a kind of natural accretion, a fossil maybe, or ghostly detritus pulled from the silt floor of a salt lake. These strange spirits lived—do I dare say it—*agile in the imagination* (Sikora).



Well yes, I did say *inspired*—in a wholly human way—despite whatever clichés or trite brouhahas you might attach to such a thing. Hard to get away from its more passé associations, to be sure. But what other word so deftly encompasses the absurd and subtle pathos of human creation, its putative apartness and *special nature*, so-called? And in this case, you know, the word carries an especially deep poetic timbre which—

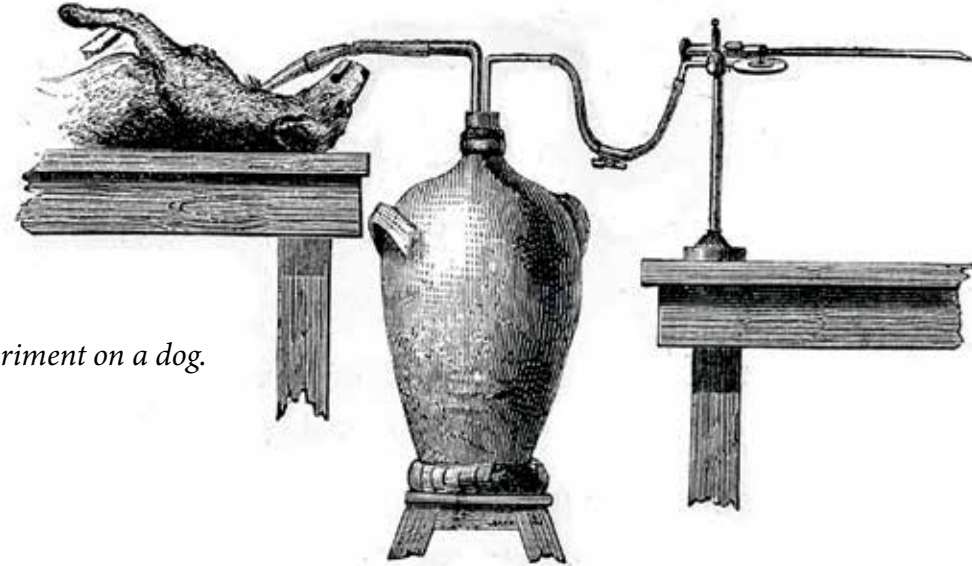


The Respirator.

Because, isn't it breath? While also spirit. *In-spirare*. Each inspiration, the ingoing of soul. Expiration, the soul's outgoing.

And no, no not then, but later. Later, in recalling those phantom beings—what were they? arboreal prosthetics? artifactual husks? such ambiguating madeness and foundness—that I began chewing on that word—*inspiration*—began turning it over in my head, examining it, like some kind of Orphic dreidel.

An Aleph of a word, you might say, something that appeared to me like *a small iridescent [word] sphere of almost unbearable brilliance* (Borges).



Inspiration experiment on a dog.

Funny, how that happens, don't you think? The way a word contains worlds. And in this case, threaded like beads on a string—heaven and earth, soil and sky—while also puncturing the line between them.

Breath a borderland. Anima through epidermis.

Because—

Was it so much air...

enveloping so much

earth

.

Poetic. This thing of weighty, solid matter—metal and mineral and rock—whose quintessential undergroundness was here carried more closely to the sky. The catastrophe of these branches charged, lifted, by some otherworldly spiritual pressure; the air around them somehow more and less dense, more and less visible. This, despite the astounding gravity of their presence.

An abutment: material and immaterial. A knotty preposition. I perceived ideas, touching. Worlds, views.

I was spinning, you could say, the metaphorical dreidel. And in the gyre, I recalled that first creative act: the filling-up of the Adamic vessel. Adam's clayness, Adam's hollowness, inspired by no mere sensual fluid, but instead, that Abrahamic mouth-to-mouth, god's lips pressing down on the receiving orifice of that mass called humanity...



Human shell theory.

W
H
O
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S
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H

*God then formed man out of dust of the ground,
and he blew into his nostrils a soul of life, and
[poof! abracadabra!] man became a living soul.
(Gen: 2:7)*

Poof and abracadabra.



Occult forms of inspiration by human deepfakes.

For in fact, and

ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH

(Everett, *Percival Everett* by *Virgil Russell*)

metaphysics begins as
metac ceramics.

(Sloterdijk, *Bubbles*)

Yes, and to return to those branches... I'm getting there.

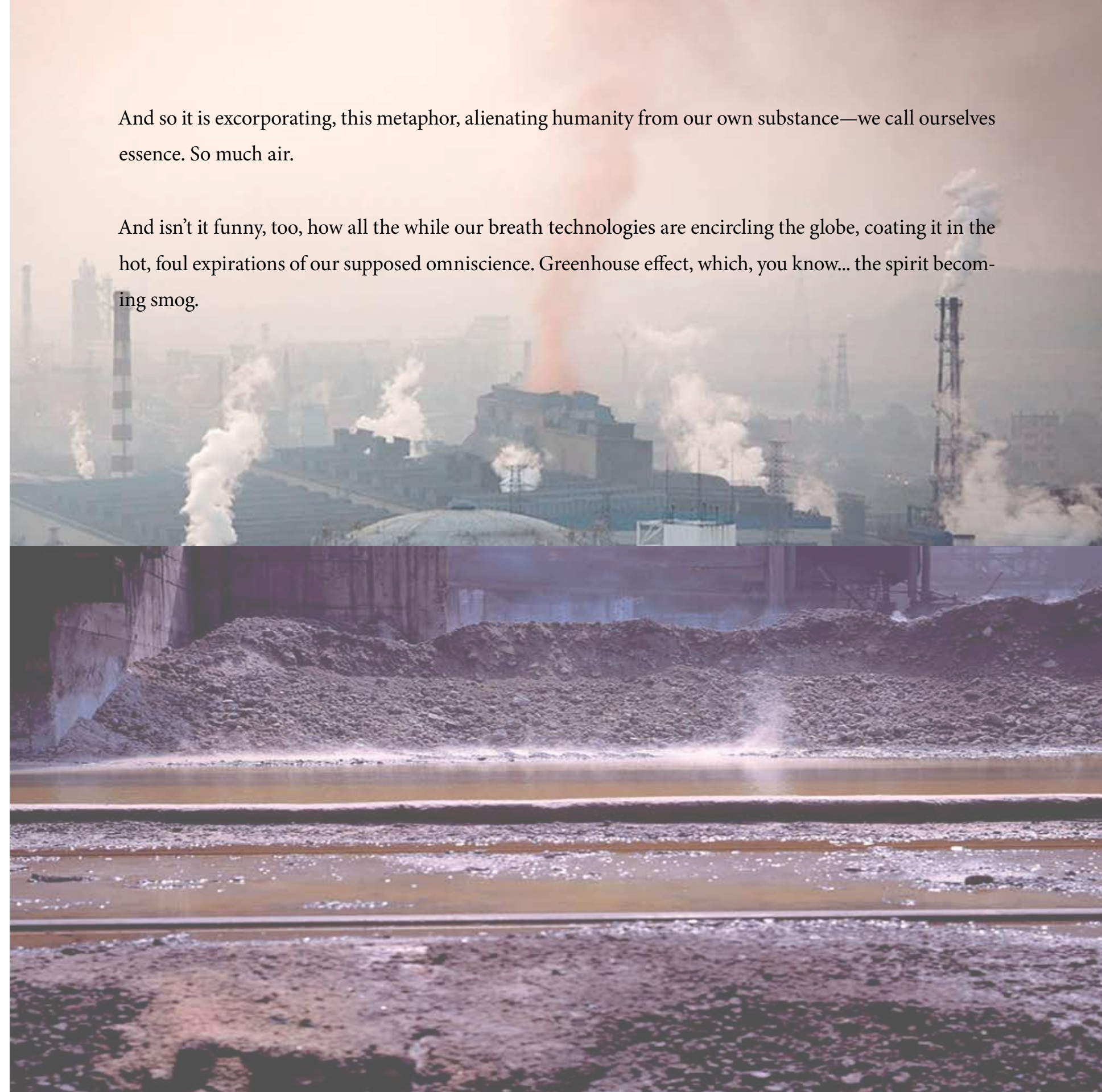
Just, permit me this tangent. Which isn't so much tangent as...
atmosphere.

It's just there's something here, and it's sort of orbiting. It's sort of habitat. Call it background. Call it stage. Except, never mind, it is everywhere, it is foreground. The very air we breathe. The non-proverbial elephant in the room, the largest and most infinite idea *the real and actual infinity of which overflows my and your capacity to think it...* (Levinas)

What I'm trying to say is that here is this word, *inspiration*—and this word is a metaphor that binds human creativity, human art and artifice, to that originary act of creation. The godliness of it all. The complete and utter authority of human authorship. And so this metaphor contains—well, it contains an ontology, a sort of cosmological schema, overlaid on the world (Dion). And according to this, this... ontological smoke-screen, or this... cosmological filter... there is an up and a down, an above and below, a heaven and earth. A dyadic thing **named spirit named material, named mind named body, named shadow named substance**. So that wherever there is *the instantaneous appearance of the idea or the gaping open of the new* (Sloterdijk, *Bubbles*) there is the body respirated from above, infused by sudden celestial breeze, guided, you know, by divine hand. Without which we are dead matter and dull machine. Adam before the whole kit and caboodle. Just a moony old golem.

And so it is excorporating, this metaphor, alienating humanity from our own substance—we call ourselves essence. So much air.

And isn't it funny, too, how all the while our breath technologies are encircling the globe, coating it in the hot, foul expirations of our supposed omniscience. Greenhouse effect, which, you know... the spirit becoming smog.



M e t a b o l i c



C o n d u i t s



Can I draw a straight line between breath technologies and phantom sticks?

No.

But a lovely swirly one, to be sure.

Because like I said, these forged specimens were, in the first instance, flute-like. Whistlingly tubular. Imagine a throat, or a pipeline, both of which being of course conduits for the passage of stuff. And in fact, in some time and place, these specimens were once throats, were once pipelines! Water moved through them, conjured upwards through capillary action, drawing, besides, phosphorous, potassium, nitrogen. There is real poetry here, in this gravity dance wherein minerals are suctioned into the sky, mixed with waves of sunlight, only to flutter downwards again and repeat, yearly, their transmigration. So much different, I think, than the architecture of a sky bearing down. Or the suffocating enclosure of Earth by the heavens.

But then, of course—those branches. They weren’t even there! Just empty. More than dead, utterly gone.

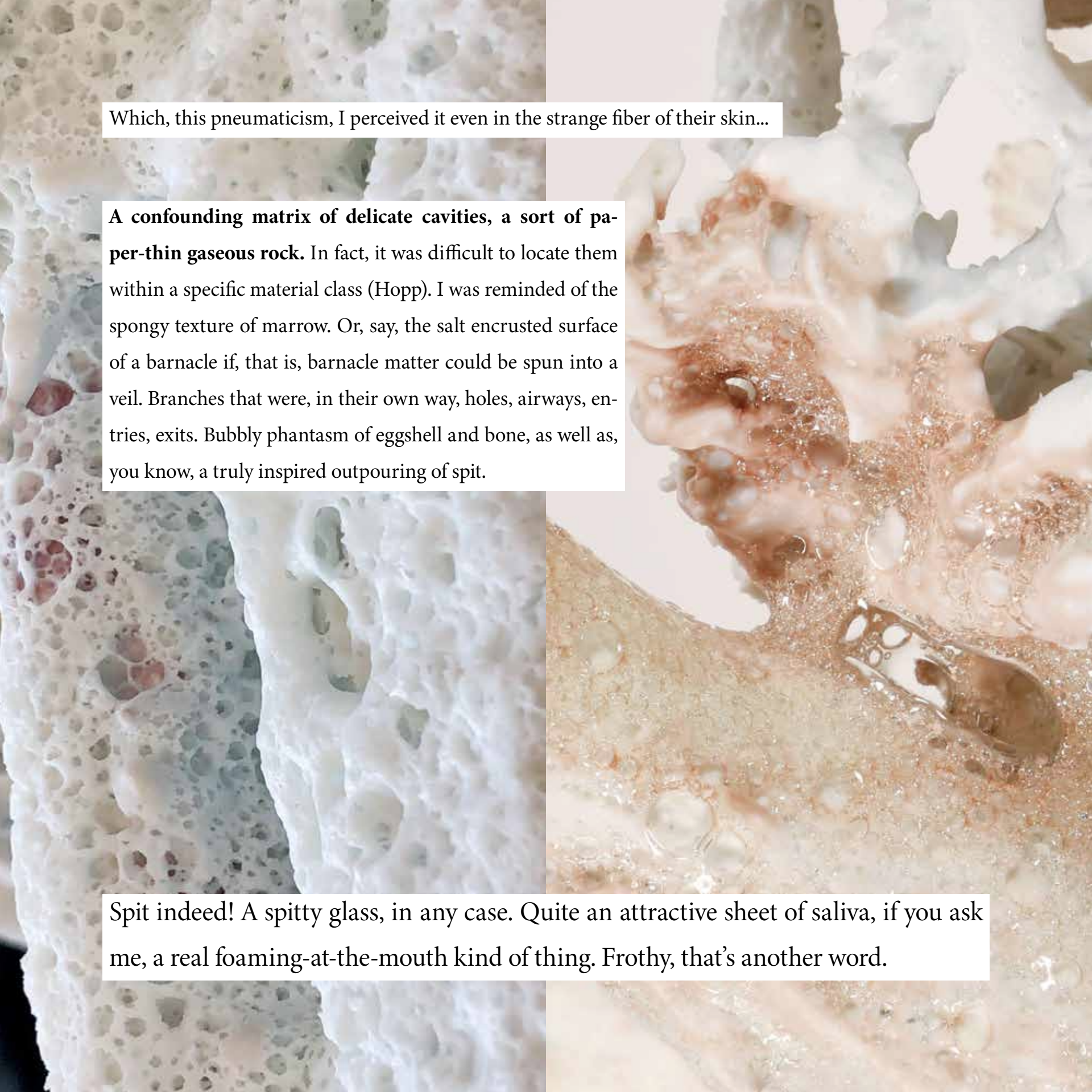
Absent, save for the sign of them. No material to pass, no capillaries by which to pass it. Hollow. Airy. Only voids and pneumatic shafts. Channels and tunnels. Can you imagine if a wind blew through that hall? How that choir might sound? Fifing and trilling, I can only believe, discordantly, a frictive and hollow tune.



Architecture of a sky bearing down. The suffocating enclosure of Earth by the Heavens.



Prepositions of the sacred underground. Iron. Silver. Gold.



Which, this pneumaticism, I perceived it even in the strange fiber of their skin...

A confounding matrix of delicate cavities, a sort of paper-thin gaseous rock. In fact, it was difficult to locate them within a specific material class (Hopp). I was reminded of the spongy texture of marrow. Or, say, the salt encrusted surface of a barnacle if, that is, barnacle matter could be spun into a veil. Branches that were, in their own way, holes, airways, entries, exits. Bubbly phantasm of eggshell and bone, as well as, you know, a truly inspired outpouring of spit.

Spit indeed! A spitty glass, in any case. Quite an attractive sheet of saliva, if you ask me, a real foaming-at-the-mouth kind of thing. Frothy, that's another word.

And that, again and moreover, they were lifted! How they floated, adrift in the air. I moved toward one: radiant, a long white spine of a body, its snapped and leaning limbs tinged an algal green. Fine silver lines threaded it to the sky, and an umbra of jagged ridges collected at its back.

These forms... They were so not-touching-of-the-Earth. They drifted above the pool of their own shadow.

And so

I perceived air and contractions of light all around me.



A metaphor, yes. I think so.

Or several, imbricated and overlapping. A sort of metabolizing-metastasizing of metaphor. The more I think about it, the more uncontrollable it becomes.



Tree, shroud, shadow.



Tree, screen, shadow.

Air is spirit; light, spirit also. And shadow...

Well, but—you do know the allegory of the cave, don't you? You must know it. All that *business about shadows and cave walls and a big fire?* (Everett, *The Water Cure*) Remember Plato? Remember Glaucon? All those make-believe-men chained, fictively, to that so-called cave floor?

Plato: So, you get the picture of the cave and big fire?

Glaucou: I do.

Plato: And you can see the men walking by, carrying things?

Glaucou: I do.

Plato: Can you see that they see only their shadows on the wall?

Glaucou: I do.

Plato: And if they were to talk, wouldn't they name the things before them?

Glaucou: They would.

Plato: But remember that all they see is shadows, and further suppose that an echo circles around them, comes from the other side of the camp, and that they cannot see where it comes from, that in fact they hear only the echo and not the voice, and really, I want you to imagine now that all these men see is the mere shadows of images and nothing at all more, and I want you to tell me just what it is then that they are naming.

(*The Water Cure*, Everett)

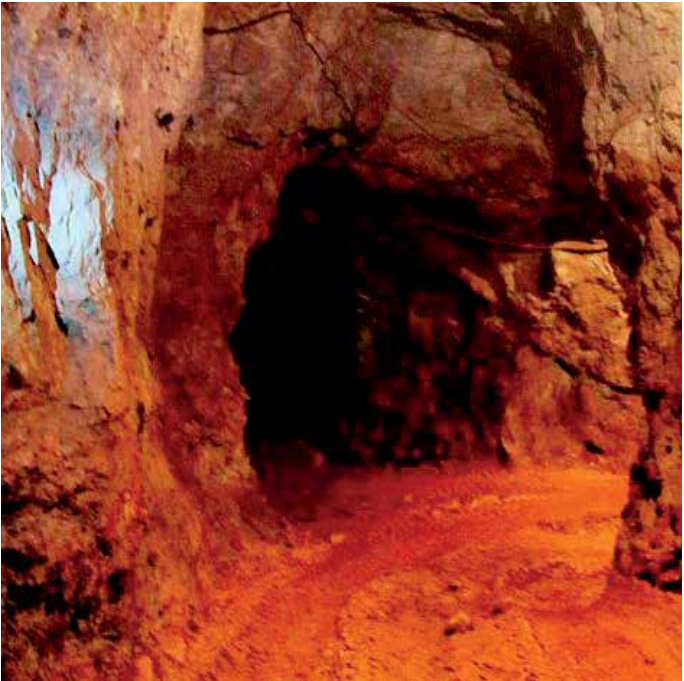
This dualism. The physical superseded by the metaphysical. This analogue to the dyad of breath and body. These men chained not merely *to* the ground, but *underground*, their *undergroundness* preventing them from coming to any true understanding of the world. This tethering a mere shadow of reality—quote unquote.

And of course, only through *transcendent ascent toward the pure light*, which, you know, is *clearly also birth from the womb*, do they release themselves of their earthly bonds, acquire true knowledge and understanding (Solnit). They must move upwards. Push away the earth. Move into the objective certainty of the sky. *Out of the maternal realm of the sensible and material, they enter the masculine territory of the intelligible* (Solnit).

You do see it, right? How—



Portal. In or out?



Following the hematic seam.

Do you see how—

How all of these stories cleave us from the world? How they impose an overarching, ladderlike order? How they are not self-contained (as if that were a thing) allegories of knowledge and inspiration, but doorways into entire top-heavy, dualistic belief systems? All positing life, essences, truth in some other place, or nonplace, or metaplace—not to germinate in the grounds of our bodies in the channels of the Earth. The ecological thus dressed in the trappings of the cosmological...

And it's not neutral, not some balancing act of equal partners. Rather, these models *make structures of domination appear natural and in union with the will of God* (Dion). This divinity has a scale, and that scale is buckling under the colossal weight of the sky. There is hierarchy here. Authority, dominion, subjugation. There is purity. Certainty, stasis, control... Utter contempt of other beings. Unimaginable, unspeakable cruelty...



Reverse cleaving.



An overarching, ladderlike order.

And those branches. As we sit here, conversing—because we are conversing, yes?—we could argue to ourselves that those branches-turned-hollow-shells are, in their own way, vessel. A form that holds the idea of some absent material. Divorced, sovereign, human conceived. Platonic *noumena*. But then how to make sense of their profound *phenomena*, their accretiveness and aesthetics of disrepair? So full of weather. Somehow both detached from the Earth, yet entirely, profoundly, of the Earth...

And then, of course, their shadow...



Seeing in the sky a mirror of ourselves.

Yes, well, a shadow...



A particularly rich and fecund phenomenon, given the tenebrous waters of its symbolism. Ghostly, yet more ambiguous than the spirit—darker, wetter, cooler, more earthbound. How it relies on some physical presence, some mass, occluding light. Intangible, sure, but *also residue or trace of something palpable and more profoundly animated*. A shadow is there and not. Present and not. Something and not. Sort of Platonic in that way, a shadow is—pulling, in its shadowy way, at *the whole Platonic agenda of reality and authenticity* (Hollander). Not only juxtaposing light and dark, substance and shadow, but also reducing the world to contour, suggestion, pure sign.

And then, of course, how a shadow can also mean the *emanation of something internal... the projection of an inner form or entity, the expression of something within us rather than the representation of our appearance* (Hollander).

A shadow, a shadow...

How interesting too, that—and this is just like in the cave—a shadow is also a thing of deception. A place to disguise, to lurk, to hide.

And I am thinking now of the wonderfully Janus-faced mesh of language, its interpretive strata and shifting locus; or, alternatively, of the myopia of ideology, and its inadvertent implications. The shadows of words. The shadows of ideas.



Moving with the light that shines on it.

A lengthening shadow augurs the closing of day, the coming of night. It is an end, a dark place, a death. It suggests some unknown power, overshadowing. In this way, it is foretelling, perhaps warning, perhaps foreboding, of something coming...



Like the shadow of an idea not yet fully thought, a shadow from the future... the ecological thought creeps over other ideas until nowhere is left untouched by its dark presence.

Timothy Morton, *The Ecological Thought*



These forms. Did they not cast and contain shadows? Did they not hover just above the ground? Did their substance and material not appear dubious? Uncertain in class and origin? Like floating *noesis*. Like wandering ghosts.



I could perceive of them shadows in another, perhaps deeper, sense, too. How they had once been decaying bark and branches, fallen sticks, upturned roots, dead matter gathered en masse. This once living material transmogrified through the application of—ceramic? Some global, industrial, mineral paste? Now, all organism burned away, survived only by their spooky envelopes—trees becoming absences, lost presences. Holes. The forms of their outsides.





In them I saw... A shadow in a sense of elegy. A shadow in a sense of mourning. A shadow in a sense of ghostliness. A shadow in the sense of a palimpsest, as a thing becomes more distant from what it once was yet retains markers of its former selves. Their material, too—their vernacular irregularity coated (overlaid? obscured?) by some universal, standardized mineral gauze—it seemed a further nod to the Platonic cave. The infinite heterogeneity of biologic material, its ceaseless complexity and mutability, petrified through homogenized, noetic dirt.



And I am thinking now—this mineral mine. That far-off process of extraction, reduction, formalization. That distant creation of type. The human attempt to move from—the entropic logic of sediment? Magmic amalgamation? To chemical purity. This mine is rather like the Platonic cave, too, is it not? Certainly, it is a breath technology pumping cavities underground.



And so yes, the longer we sit here, talking, contemplating these phantom assemblages of sticks—deathly and spirited, full of air, casting and holding shadows—the more I am drawn to think of these things.



Pretending to be a rock.

[Interlude:

the sound of pages turning.]



CONDITIONAL
RESENCE
rotin Spillors









































Being latching onto being and **pulling**

Why should we continue to model our philosophies on foundations, our cosmologies on background spacetimes, and our geologies on Holocene uniformities, when the evidence is pointing us in the opposite direction? **Our earth is not a ground, but a tiny metastable region of an unstable and dying universe.**

Thomas Nail, *Theory of the Earth*

There is no loss.

Martin Howse, *Becoming Geological*

There is of course another way to look at it.

By now, I was talking to you maniacally and conspiratorially (my favorite), meaning everything and its opposite. My mouth was progressively fuller and fuller of dirt, and I was emitting a sandy spray with each attempt at enunciation. The rule was that we were supposed to eat neither in, nor from, the raw materials lab, but I was curious to probe my own incorporation of earth materials. Also, you promised never to tell. Even as I sought, mid-conversation, to disturb a sodden clump of bentonite congealed to my upper gum, poking at it incessantly with my tongue.

A way that is closer. Danker, fumier, more proximate. The gases not so much ethereal as swampic, truly there. Air perspiring.

The clump of gluey bentonite finally coming loose and the excitement of its viscid slide down the duct of my throat.

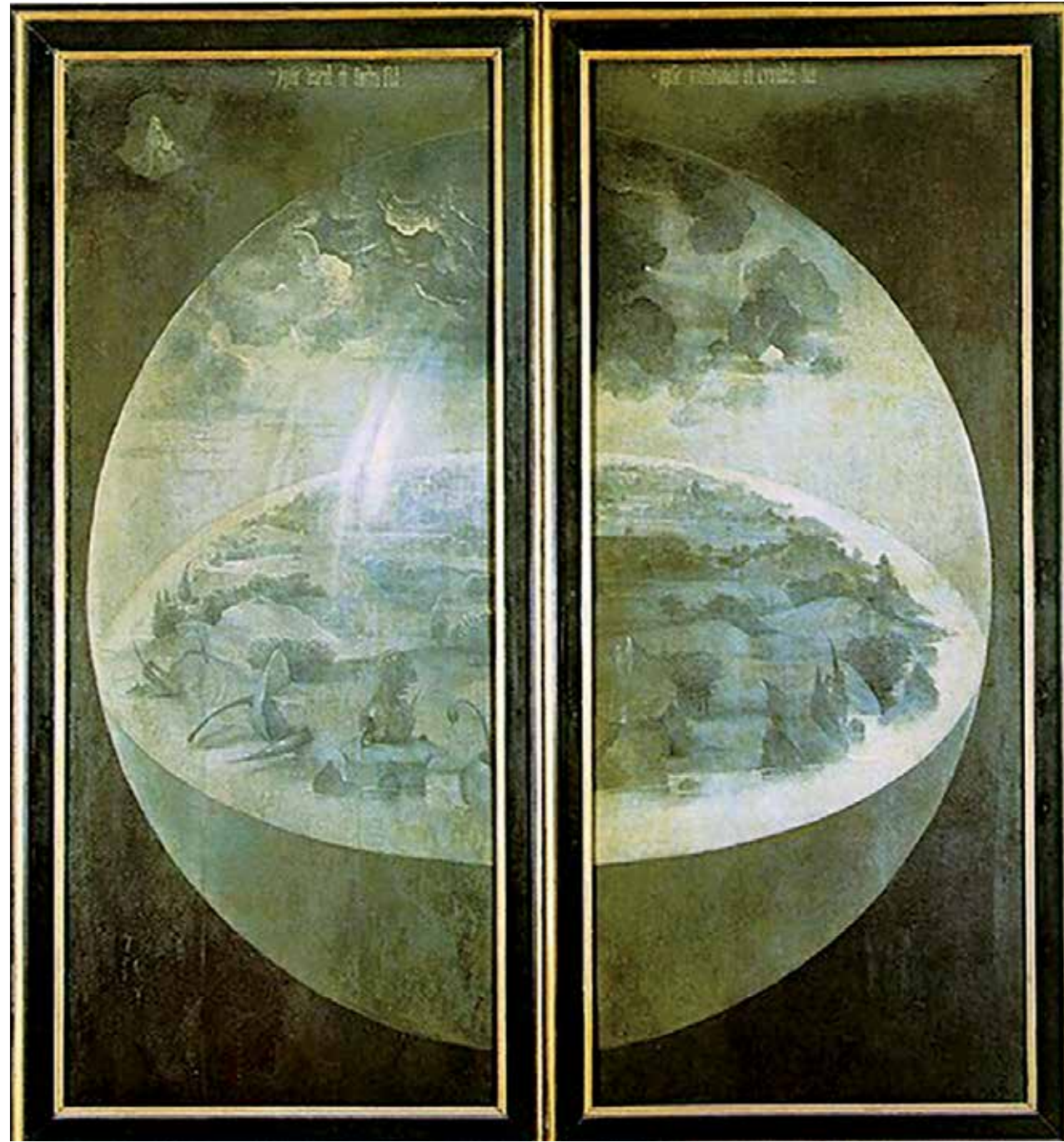
The mouth... The body's airways... Entrances, exits. Ways in. What is it they say? Orifices being especially vulnerable areas, what comes out of them marginal stuff? Spit, blood, urine, milk. Mucus, shit. Offspring. Eggs. All margins being susceptible. The apartness of any structure being vulnerable at its margins (Douglas). What I mean is—

That, while yes, it's true these formations, when seen from a particular angle, offered a kind of delicate metaphysics... The whole thing of their *thereness* and *goneness*, like some kind of life and afterlife; or their fragile materiality and the pervasive aura of gases and shadows that suffused and surrounded them... Material and immaterial. That yes, from that particular angle, everything could be said to be in stark juxtaposition to everything else, and the world a series of contrasts, foils, and discrete parts. But then, and couldn't you also say: maybe it wasn't like that at all.

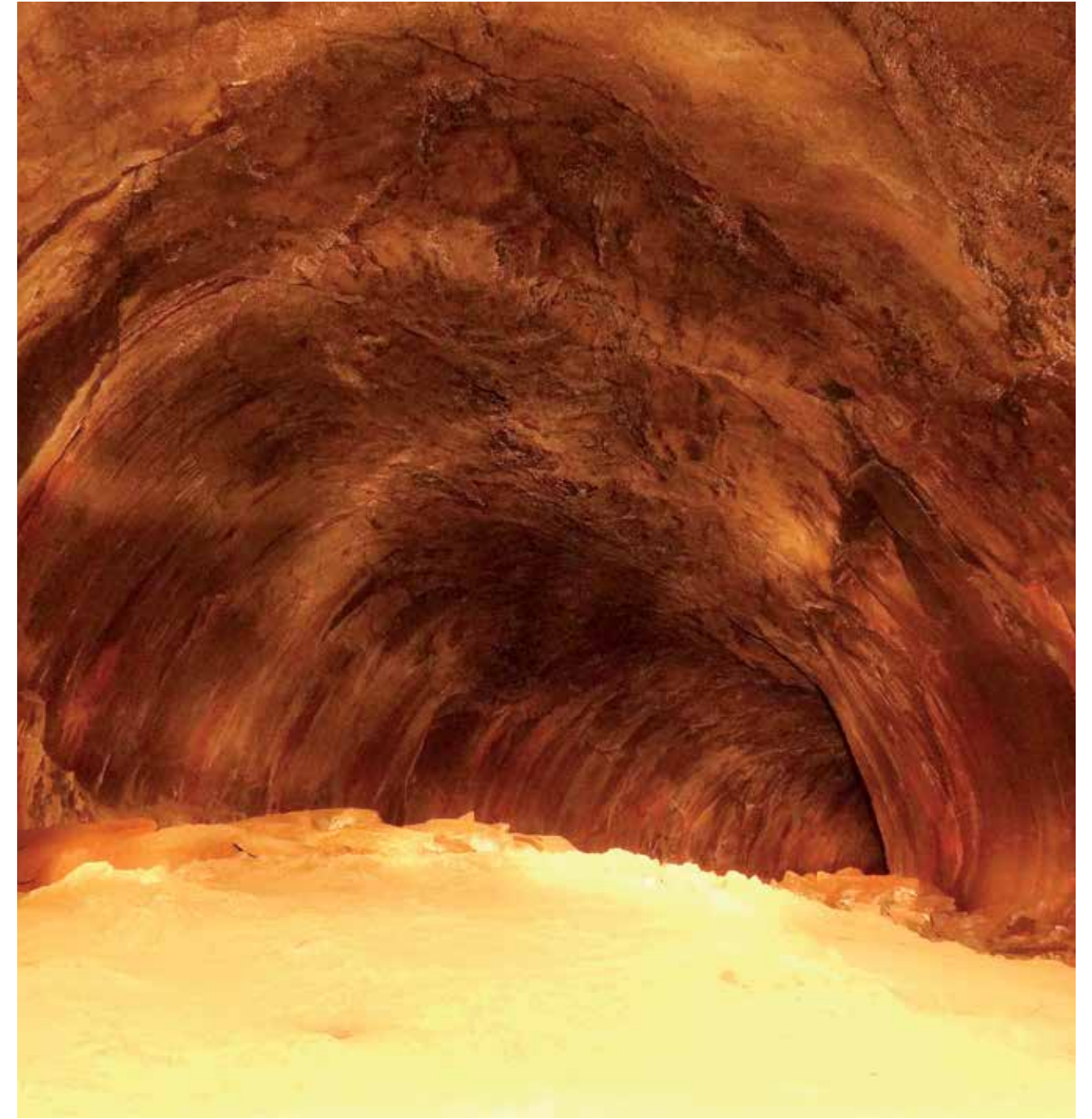
Maybe the voids and channels—that emptiness invading substance—maybe it was not absence, but opening. What if it was mouth? The capacity for transfer and exchange on every level. You can see it, can't you? How in the hollowness of these forms and surfaces, there were perhaps not metaphysical boundaries, but real filters and porous envelopes. (*Solidness, what is it?*)



Here's a way of putting it: the *smooth, universal orb* is popped (Sloterdijk, *Foams*). We popped it. Good riddance to the smooth, universal orb.



"Alone, alone, all all alone" (Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner)



There is no such thing as solid ground, you know. There is no firm place on which to stand.

Whatsoever you’ve been told by whomsoever metaphysicians, the ground is not really a place. The air neither. The static boundaries between and around them: self-willed, make-believe. Do not trust the *tools of ontological simplification* (Sloterdijk, *Foams*). They account for nothing and no one.



In the face of emergency, some flee back into the protective shell of the smooth, universal orb.

Which is to say, isn’t air just as material as earth? And that intransigent asymmetry of the sky, its heavy ontological architecture, perhaps it is less rigid, less oppressive, if we imagine the originary breath, that act of creative inspiration, as more of a *bipolar intimacy*, a *pneumatic pact*. Two-way permeability: god and humans in the same placenta, making each other, which is also to say humans and their materials. *Indeed, perhaps the notion of an originator is simply misleading... Once set up, the canal of animation... filled with endless double echo games, can only be understood as a two-way system* (Sloterdijk, *Bubbles*).

You look at me, you look at me closely, each time closer and then we play cyclops, we look at each other closer each time and our eyes grow, they grow closer, they overlap and the cyclops look at each other, breathing confusion...

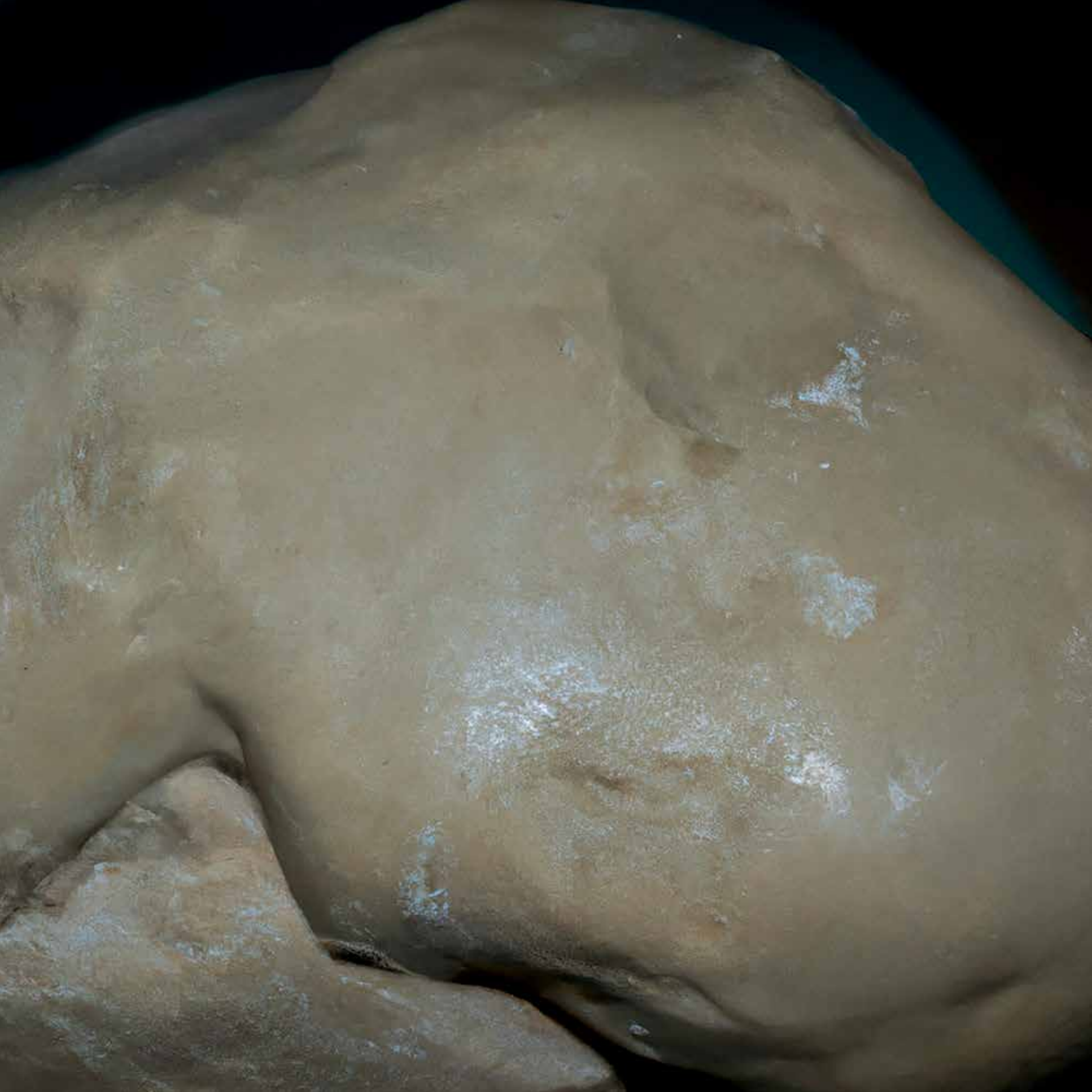
Hopscotch, Julio Cortázar

What am I trying to do? I am trying to outline *a theory of the present age from the perspective that “life” unfolds multifocally, multiperspectively and heterarchically* (Sloterdijk, *Foams*). And yes, it has to do with those shadowy masses. Their mineralization. The accumulative pressures of their transmutation and decay.

Trying, too, to establish—

Who made them? Not Rose. Or, not only Rose. Rose being just a small part. Infinitesimal. Collaborator—maybe. Generously. Or participant. The vast sweep of those chemical reactions—geological and biological churnings—taking place on a timescale she will barely inhabit. Poof, she’s gone. *All space and body being itself nothing but coagulated time...* (Thomas Moynihan).

Because—



Ecology, you know, is a quagmire. An epistemological knot. Strange science of strange strangers (Morton), hoisted by its own petard. How do we create knowledge in a profoundly bizarre, perhaps fundamentally unknowable, fabric of subjectivity—its apparently infinite array of perspectives? How do we build understanding in a moving house? The lens, kinetic and kaleidoscopic. The truth, slippery. Whatever you’ve heard about certainty, about neutrality, about the harmony of ideas... I say

throw it to the dogs.

And—

Throw Nature to the dogs, in fact. I’m through with it. And the pernicious purity and apartness of its thought.



—poses really profound questions about consciousness. About what or who is accorded moral consideration, or justice. Interdependence being everything and everywhere. There being no in or outside.

And so boundaries become porous, taxonomies blur.

(Have you wondered why I am addressing you this way? Full of voice—despite whatever stodgy library cabinet, or home shelving unit, in which I might reside. This voice emphasizing subjectivity, multipolarity, a give-and-take. Which is, of course, the mode and posture of ecological thought... and its residence in instability.... There being no metaposition from which we can make ecological pronouncements (Morton).

***Can you believe I am fiction?** Although whatever my fictive elements, they pale in comparison to the **fabricated voices of authority that radiate all around**. Authority being the most fictive premise of all. How could I—how could I discuss ambiguity in the context of ecology without also creating ambiguity ecologically? I say: may the meanings, and the shadows of meanings, escape me. May the choir sing every note, and in all directions.)*

Is there any material quite so resonate of chaos, of heterogeneity, of amalgamation, as dirt? *Amorphous soil, uniting fertility with decay* (Solnit). How different it is, in attitude, in orientation, from the *cravings for the immutable*, and the immutable's *self-orienting frameworks* (Solnit, Morton). Birth and death: a doubling, a felt echo, endless game of endless telephone, cascading through mutation, consumption, and repeat.

Eating being everything.

Dirt. Disorderly, primordial, entropic. The creative, constructive possibilities of dirt are congenital. Any form is possible from a state of utter formlessness. And the fact that it is so low and downward! So ordinary and impure. So that if dirt has meaning, then *meaning is immanent in all substance, meaning is everywhere* (Solnit). And so I ask you, **is clay not the dirtiest material? Is it not the most earth?**

True, but nonetheless. I will not rest in romantic platitudes (Harrow). I am far too disturbed, by now, for that. I will express no vague Gaianic sentiment, much less about the subterranean economy. These particular materials having been disgorged from their bedrock by insatiable metal machinery. The incorporated giants of History. The voids, the pits, the acids, the water running through it all (Lippard). I see instead power, hacking its own cave.



Earth's amalgamation. The *radical intimacy* of it (Morton).

The planet's long ingestion of its own crust, and in the heat of its bowels, magmic reincorporation, followed by insides becoming outsides, and then, once more, washing into valleys of sediment... Returning, at rock's starry pace, back underground.

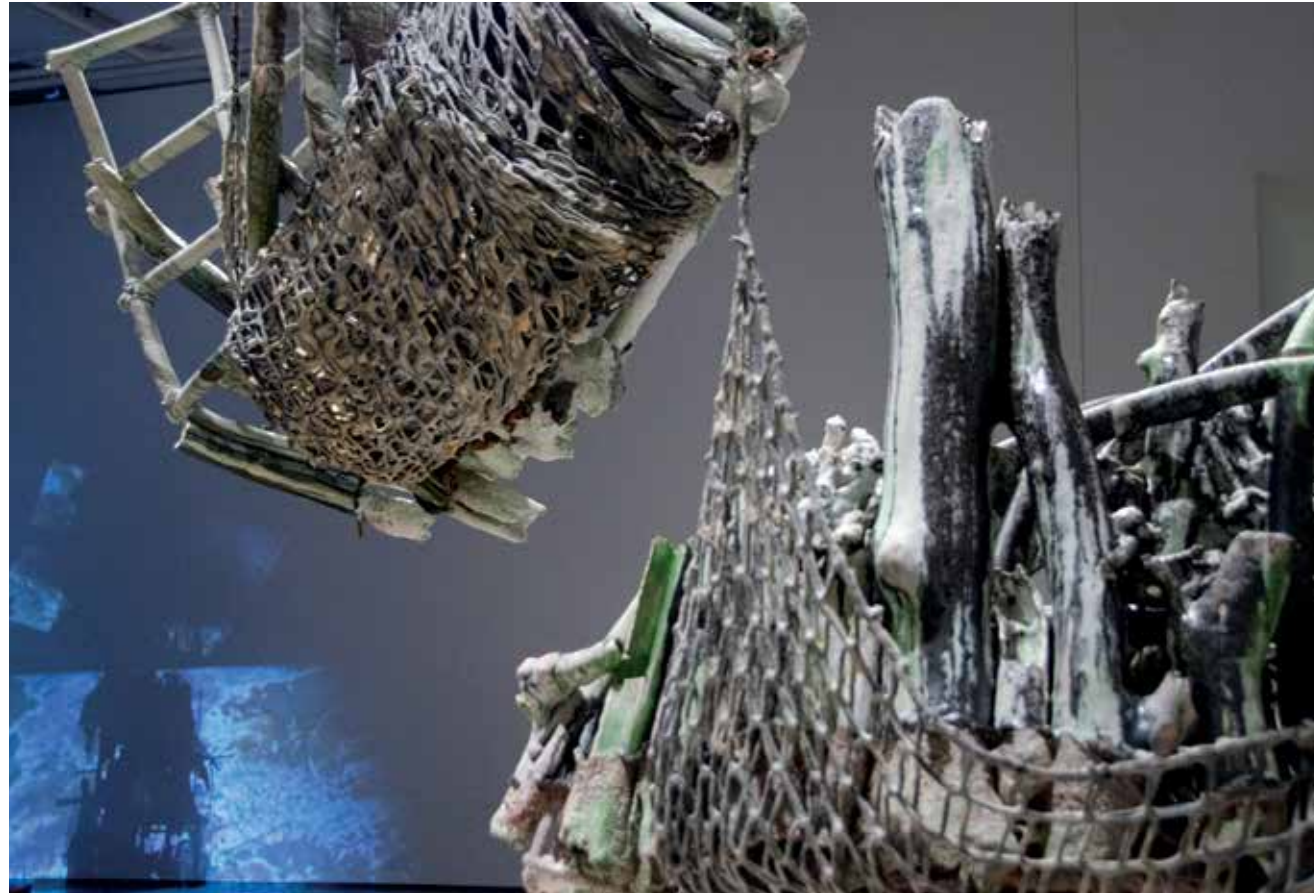


Sediment. Is that what these are? Some kind of geologic weathering? Collapse, petrification, strata: the slow crystallization of decay.

And so what first appeared absent and unearthly, spirited in that detached way, began to seem more like a concatenation, a dynamic mass of interlocking forces and events. A cat's cradle, or a dense, spidery mesh.



Trees and rocks. I saw it. The branches amassed like thickets. They leaned and pulled and descended in massive bio-mineral aggregations. Each part was a ligament. The whole thing, connective tissue. Everything was affected and affecting. Everything was bent and bending. Entangled. Ensnared. And deeply.



It was mesh. This was mesh. Which is to say, full of *holes and the threading between them* (Morton). The nets, the knots, the knitting. The strange fiber of the dredging net (always the overlaying of material, and the creation of new zones and relationships). The fine strings. The heavy gridworks folding over. Everything was interconnecting. All of it, the whole hulking structure, just a *delicate web of cavities and subtle walls* (Sloterdijk, *Foams*). Even the foamic glaze was its own porous matrix. Bubbles and sponge.

Matter thus offers an infinitely porous, spongy or cavernous texture without emptiness, caverns endlessly contained in other caverns: no matter how small each body contains a world pierced with irregular passages, surrounded by an increasingly vaporous fluid, the totality of the Universe resembling a ‘pond of matter in which there exist different flows and waves.’

Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold*

Foams everywhere like the letter e, down to the alveolar structure.

Caroline Bergvall, *About Foam*

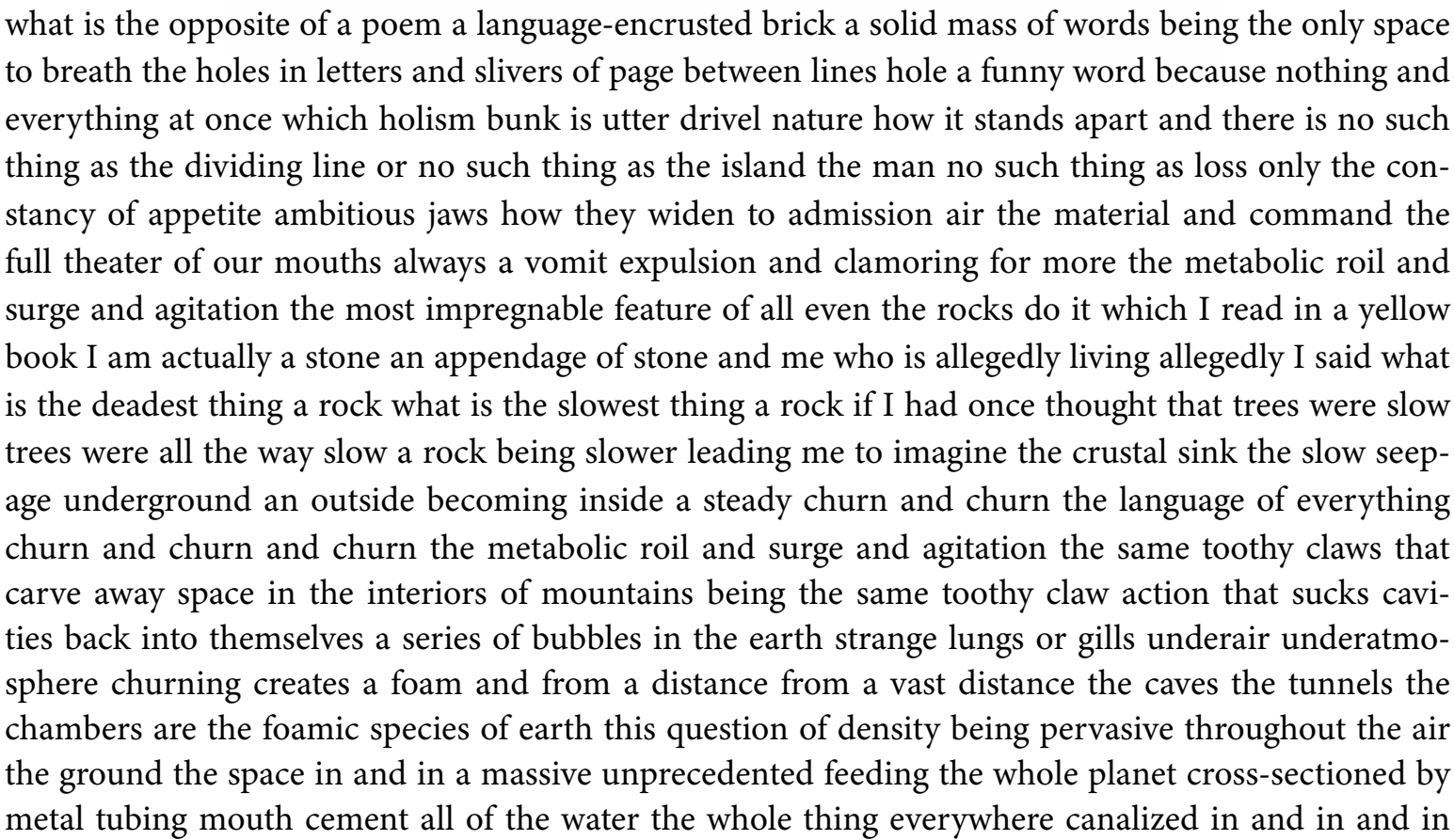
Can a hole cast a shadow?

These did. Or perhaps, a shadow filled them. By which I mean, here was *air where it should not be* and what had once seemed *autonomous, homogenous and solid was transformed into a loosened structure* (Sloterdijk, *Foams*). This thing was a sign, sure, for regimes of the spirit. Repressive gridworks. But the actual, material expression of that sign was the spirit's inverse: something like recycling. Something like precarity. Something like the non-fact of solidness. The whole branchy system could tip. Dislodge, relocate.

And here the hollowness turned capacious: I imagined these branchy masses in the heat of the kiln. What an event! All that slippage. Limbs glissading through streams of puffy glass. All of it liquifying, bubbling, gassing. The space, all that space, the cavities and thin walls of the rocklike mass, allowing everything to shift and curl and fold. This was substance, relieved of eternity.

*And it could be entered. Full of ways in. This being everything, everything a medium
for everything else.*





in and in and in in and in and in in and in and in what is the opposite of a poem, a language-encrusted brick a solid mass of words being the only space to breath the holes in letters and slivers of page between lines hole a funny word because nothing and everything at once which holism bunk is utter drivel nature how it stands apart and there is no such thing as the dividing line or no such thing as the island the man no such thing as loss only the constancy of appetite ambitious jaws how they widen to admission air the material and command the full theater of our mouths always a vomit and expulsion and clamoring for more the metabolic roil and surge and agitation the most impregnable feature of all even the rocks do it which I read in a yellow book I am actually a stone an appendage of stone and me who is allegedly living allegedly I said what is the deadest thing a rock what is the slowest thing a rock if I had once thought that trees were slow trees were all the way slow a rock being slower leading me to imagine the crustal sink the slow seepage underground an outside becoming inside a steady churn and churn the language of everything churn and churn and churn the metabolic roil and surge and agitation the same toothy claws that carve away space in the interiors of mountains being the same toothy claw action that sucks cavities back into themselves a series of bubbles in the earth strange lungs or gills underair underatmosphere churning creates a foam and from a distance from a vast distance the caves the tunnels the chambers are the foamic species of earth this question of density being pervasive throughout the air the ground the space in and in a massive unprecedented feeding the whole planet cross-sectioned

by metal tubing mouth cement all of the water the whole thing everywhere canalized in and in and in what is the opposite of a poem, a language-encrusted brick, a solid mass of words being the only space to breath the holes in letters and slivers of page between lines hole a funny word because nothing and every thing at once which holism bunk is utter devil nature how it stands apart and there is no such thing as the dividing line or no such thing as the island the man no such thing as loss only the constancy of appetite ambitious jaws how they widen to admission air which material and command the full theater of our mouths always a vomit and expulsion and clamoring for more the metabolic roll and surge and agitation the most impregnable feature of all even the rocks do it which I read in a yellow book I am actually a stone an appendage of stone and me who is allegedly living allegedly I said what is the deadeast thing a rock what is the slowest thing a rock if I had once thought that trees were slow trees were all the way slow a rock being slower leading me to imagine the crustal sink the slow seepage underground an outside becoming inside a steady churn and churn the language of everything churn and churn and churn the metabolic roll and surge and agitation the same toothy claws that carve away space in the interiors of mountains being the same toothy claw action that sucks cavities back into themselves a series of bubbles in the earth strange lungs of gills under air under atmosphere churning creates a foam and from a distance from a vast distance the caves the tunnels the chambers are the foamy species of earth this question of density being pervasive throughout the air the ground the space in and in a massive unprecedented feeding the whole planet cross-sectioned

what is the opposite of a poem a language encrusted brick a solid mass of words being the only space to breathe and notes which do not sink into the ear but rather move its slabs and its words appear as obstructions even dividing the line of no such thing as the island of the mainlands such things as lack only the constancy of abbeys and obvious faws how they widened to admission all which material and command the full theater of our mouths any speech of mine and expulsions and expulsions to more the metal of oil and surge and ablation of the most pendage of stone and the who is allegedly doing allegedly said what is the deadest such a rock with its slowest thing a rock I had once thought that trees were slower trees were all the way slow a rock being slower leading me to imagine that language itself is moving slower pages underground than on sides being inside a sea and ablation of the mainlands the clay of air the way in language in the world of stones in the earth strange things of only a few actions that suck the clay back into themselves a series of problems in the earth strange things of only under air under atmosphere churning creates a foam and from a distance from a vast distance the waves the

what is the opposite of a poem? a language encrusted brick, a solid mass of words being the only space to breathe in. or what is the opposite of a poem? a language that is so much more than a language, that it is a place, a place where the only way to get out is to go in. or what is the opposite of a poem? a language that is so much more than a language, that it is a place, a place where the only way to get out is to go in. or what is the opposite of a poem? a language that is so much more than a language, that it is a place, a place where the only way to get out is to go in.

[illegible]

What is the hope of a faith in a broken language, a trusted brick in a solid mass of rubble being the only chance to
 survive the fall of a world? What is the hope of a faith in a broken language, a trusted brick in a solid mass of rubble being the only chance to
 by metal digging into the pebbles of the water and whole things even where can be seen in and in and in
 What is the hope of a faith in a broken language, a trusted brick in a solid mass of rubble being the only chance to
 by metal digging into the pebbles of the water and whole things even where can be seen in and in and in



HOW IS IT
HOW IT IS?

(technical statement)



These ceramic sculptures were made, in part, by applying clay slip to organic matter, then burning that organic matter away. Materials such as roots and branches, bark, rope, string, nets, and knitting served as molds.



Once fired, these organic molds turned to ash, their forms preserved as hollow voids. They became, in a sense, palimpsests, signs of their former selves. Both absent and present.



Mesh, netting, fabric, webbing, matrices—these are all visual metaphors. They speak to ecological themes of relation and interconnection. They have no absolute form—instead, they are malleable. A morphology that is contingent, adaptable, and relational.



Alluvial accretion. Aesthetics of disrepair. How long did it take for this to happen? Is this human detritus, washed onto a phantom shore? Or is its timescale slower, aenoic, beyond-the-human world?

Minerals seeping through matrices of interconnection.



Pieces are bisque fired separately.

Sometimes, these ceramic husks break down in the firing, creating mineral wood chips. The resultant fragments are reminiscent of gravel—an interesting, if unintentional, poetic nod to the products of mining and extraction.



Pieces are glazed and assembled in beds of sand.



Because they are not fired on a hard, flat surface, once removed from the kiln, these sculptures often appear to float just above the ground. As objects made from wood and ceramic minerals, they are, at once, profoundly of the earth, yet detached from it.



A thin band of granular ilmenite was unearthed during the excavation process.



Plemp Slip

Grolleg	4000 grams
Molochite 30	1000 grams
Molochite 80	3000 grams
Molochite 120	1000 grams
Neph Sye	1000 grams
Flax Fiber	25 grams
Paper Fiber	100 grams
Water	3200 grams, small additions later
Darvan	10 grams to start, small additions later (to taste)

Note: This recipe is highly adaptable. The molochite can be mixed in, or replaced, with various types of grog (such as sand or crushed bisqueware). Make sure to mix the water, Darvan, flax and paper fibers first. Then add the Grolleg and Neph Sye, followed by the various grogs.



Top: Holocene fired to cone 5.5 in heavy reduction. Bottom: Holocene fired to cone 8 in heavy reduction, with additions of manganese.



Holocene

Neph Sye	42
Custer Feldspar	25
Strontium Carbonate	17.25
Silica	8.25
Kentucky OM4 Ball Clay	4.5
Lithium Carbonate	3

Note: Holocene is as enigmatic as it is versatile. I cannot explain it. In oxidation, it often appears sugary, with small bubbles and crystals. In reduction, it can achieve a remarkable variation of textures on a single piece: a foamy crust, a satin marble, a translucent spit.

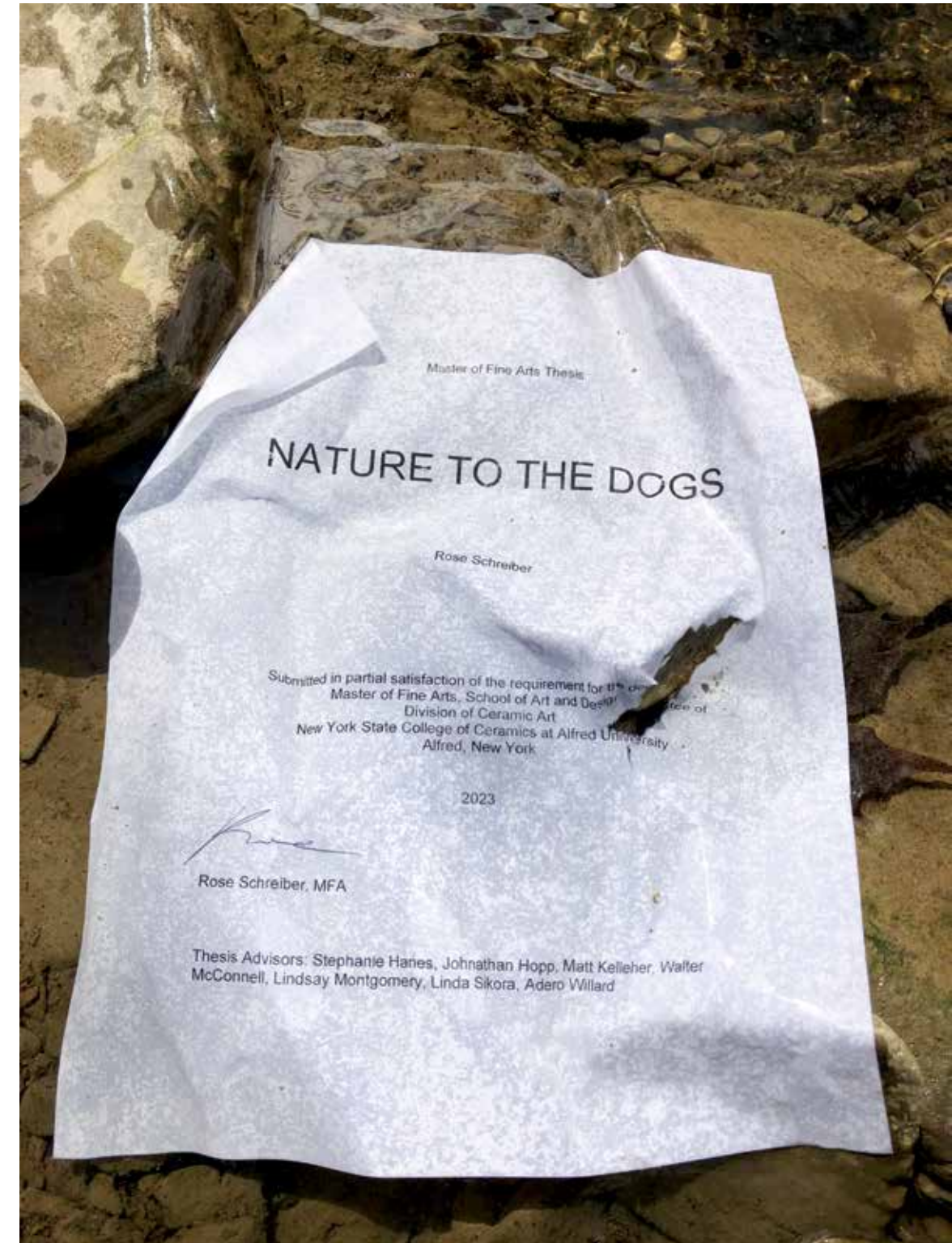
Thank you, Matt, Yonatan, Walter, Linda, Joey, and Hope. I have treasured our relationships. I am so grateful to you all.

Thank you, Del, for inviting me into a wider ecocritical conversation around ceramic materials.

Thank you, family. I love you all so much, and feel so loved and supported in return.



Thank you to my friend and exhibition partner, Justin. Showing together was part of our ecological thought.



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A note on in-text citations and quotations: in order to not disrupt the narrative flow of this text, I opted to **not** use quotation marks. Instead, the voices of various authors, as well as faculty and friends, merge with my own: we are all tributaries flowing into this river. From a philosophical and creative standpoint, this echoes a major theme in this text—of interconnection, of the porosity of so-called boundaries. That said, direct quotations are italicized in otherwise non-italicized text blocks (and vice versa), followed by the author’s name in parenthesis. If an author’s name is listed in parenthesis, but the text formatting is not changed, then the words have been paraphrased.

A note on the final poem: the phrase “full theater of his mouth” is borrowed from Percival Everett; “mouth cement” is borrowed from Mark Baumer; and “trees are slow, obviously trees are all the way slow” is borrowed from Steve Roggenbuck.

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Note: “Seeing yourself from another point of view is the beginning of ethics and politics.” (Morton, 14)

P 6-7. Rose Schreiber, *Untitled*, Ceramic, 2022, detail image.

P 8. Joseph Jachna, *North Fork, Flambeau River, 1967*, Gelatin silver print, 1967, University of Arizona: Center for Creative Photography.

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P 78-87. Rose Schreiber, detail images of various ceramic sculptures, 2022-2023.

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