

Organelle

Sue Rainsford

This was intended as an inquiry into matter: its behaviours both metaphysical and molecular, the material prospects of its gauzy weave.

This was intended as an inquiry into why certain components amalgamate, and why certain components later come apart.

To begin with, there was a space containing several assemblages. From these assemblages, we took samples. From these samples, we intended to extrapolate slivers of analysis that would later see an argument cohere. Later, when they were placed, cleanly and serviceably, side by side, we were certain their meaning would become palpable. At that time, that *later time*, their meaning would find itself unable to resist assembly.

In short, we were confident these assemblages would be governed by the usual push and pull of a rigorously orchestrated inquiry, and so we commenced to chip and hack.

Quickly, however, it became apparent that where meaning came away it came away in coarse and brittle fragments.

It became apparent that 'meaning' was shards of rockface whose edges never realigned.

The feeling of these shards is the feeling of gums crowded and made sore by too many teeth.

Despite the length and breadth of the analysis conducted, this is all I can speak to now.

This too-full mouth feeling.

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In the beginning, we approached these assemblages in the usual way: as a group of formations that may or may not have been purposefully *left* here, that may or may not have been organically *grown*.

We asked the standard initial questions: left by *whom*, grown by *whom*, this wood grain pattern and soft heap slump?

But, from our first day at the site, from the door's first unlocking and our first steps inside, it became evident that we couldn't quite prevent the room from tipping.

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I tried to stand in the corner and survey these formations in their entirety but there was no

stable plane that I could
make grip to.

It was a more insidious sensation than being in motion.

It was more that, though I was stood still and stable, in my stomach and ankles there was the whirredness that comes from spinning. It was more that, in the pit of my throat, there was the quick slick bile that comes from the pineal gland's sudden dipping.

I tried to draw empirical data from this initial, internal jolting, and began listing words that seemed accurate and useful: terms such as 'dismember' and 'fluctuate'.

I chose these words because these assemblages seemed to be performing a transgression that was impacting the space around them, generating an incompatibility I presumed was chemical; unusual, but ultimately uncomplicated.

And so, I parsed this transgression in familiar and unremarkable terminology:

rest
mass
volume
cubic

But these terms were bandages with their adhesion worn away. Now, even these tight definitions seemed to aid these assemblages in being something other than what they were supposed to be.

Still: we clung to our methodology.

no matter every instrument we had brought with us with which to make measure became defective as soon as it was called upon to perform its function

no matter extraction was continually prevented and, as a consequence, distinction disabled

no matter substances that had previously cohered were now similarly destabilized

no matter depth itself had curled into a cloud, thick and roving

No matter.

We continued to cite to one another the broader rhythms of the world.

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In my notes I attempted to capture what was occurring, namely an irrational juxtaposition of elements that *did not belong together*, but were insisting nonetheless on a kind of fusion.

An interlacement living as a bright red line, a chasm with its insides sparkling and livid.

This was when we, too, became unconcerned at an unspeakable level with what it was we were *meant* to be.

They will become something other, no longer wings, and the butterfly will be something that is no longer butterfly. ¹

In brief: certain unpredictable conditions took hold, and too late were we alerted to the possibilities of contagion.

Of reconstitution.

*You are made to realise that a landscape is a living thing;
a landscape exerts life; a landscape enters through the eyes,
and breathes into you...²*

By that time it was evident the assemblages were not only sentient, but

c r e a t u r e l y

Each specimen, though neither mammal nor vegetal, held inside a quick-paced organ that we, in our naivety, interpreted as a heart.

It was at this time I became convinced we should not open the door.

I felt, if we opened the door, we would be given over to Rapture, which was a sensation pertaining to tissues I did not know were inside me, and which took hold of me when I realised that all this time there'd been a sample in my mouth.

¹ Kang, Han, *The White Book*, Portobello Books, 2017, 49

² Oates, Joyce Carol. *I'll Take You There*. Ecco, Harper Collins, 2002, 253

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From the first day, perhaps the first hour.

I could feel it there, snug and venomous. An egg wrapped thick and tight.

I began to look through the collected samples though I was afraid to know the one that was missing, the one I'd been unwittingly insulating as it made ready to synthesize –

Another form of sorcery, perhaps, wherein and whereby bodies relate to other bodies, human and nonhuman – animals, plants, the seasons, tides, and the movement of the stars and the winds – forms of sensateness, of bodily knowing, that exist beneath the radar of consciousness...³

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My notes, when I first began to make them, were divided as usual across three columns and several rows:

vegetal	motion	contour
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I was attempting to anticipate the logic by which these masses would distribute themselves, but whenever my pen approached a column the ink came thick with

a confusion of sunlight on rock⁴
a confusion of sunlight
a confusion
light

Now, the columns read

organelle	vestige	quartet
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and inside the columns I find only sentences I don't remember writing:

terrain that lifted slantwise from the earth like a humped, hunched shoulder⁵

³ Taussig, Michael. What color is the sacred?. University of Chicago Press, 2010, 15

⁴ Oates, Joyce Carol. I'll Take You There. Ecco, Harper Collins, 2002, 278

⁵ Ibid, 277

The chronology of my notes has since amalgamated so the days are all one thick rope that my hands are blistered from gripping.

We had assumed we would acquire new information, but something slippery was seeded into their ontology. They are too robust with being old and matterful, full of properties that have managed to sidestep extinction.

But what, in any case, can we hope to know of a river? Other than it's a long watery body made to lie on its back and trust we won't do it harm by incising its upturned rivulet belly?

Maybe this is what I have deduced for certain: a river is a lizard that cannot right itself.

Or perhaps what I know for certain is that a river is a place where an arm will bend at any angle you tell it to.

Or that the wedge of space you think you live inside of is only a temporary gathering of such crude

phenomena as mountains, rivers, canyons, plateaus, glacial troughs. Such mute phenomena as rock, sand, sand flats, buttes, mesas, bluffs ⁶ ,
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and that this muteness is absolute.

When you open your mouth, when you curl and flick your tongue, the sound you hear is not your voice but the sound of the wind passing through you.

Perhaps this is what I know: it is only when you are a shell for the wind that your muteness ceases, and you become something like the thing you have believed yourself to be.

Yes. This is what I know.

Such is your intangibility, it is only by some temporary gust of air passing through you that you manage to make some sound.

⁶ Ibid, 254